

HUNTED DOWN

FIVE

BY

RECOLLECTIONS OF

JAMES MCCLELLAN

Author of "BROUGHT TO BAY"



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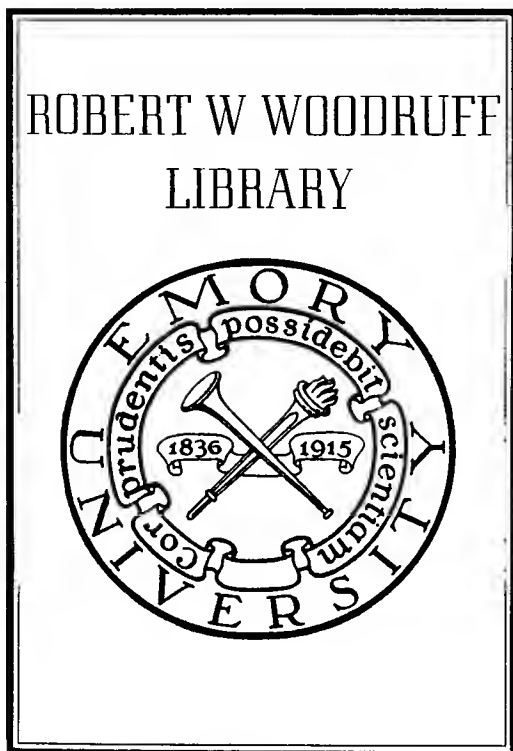
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H U N T E D D O W N

OR

Recollections of a City Detective.

BY JAMES M'GOVAN,

AUTHOR OF "BROUGHT TO BAY."

FIFTH EDITION.

EDINBURGH:
THE EDINBURGH PUBLISHING COMPANY.
LONDON: SIMPKIN, MARSHALL, & CO.

1882.

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In hope that
THESE PAGES CONTAIN NOTHING WHICH ANY MOTHER NEED
HESITATE TO PLACE BEFORE HER CHILDREN, I LAY

This Obedience,
IN REVERENCE AND LOVE, ON THE GRAVE OF
MY MOTHER.

THE AUTHOR.

EDINBURGH 1878

PREFACE TO THE FOURTH EDITION.

IN bringing out a Fourth Edition of these Recollections, it would be ungrateful of the writer to do so without thanking his readers for the deep interest, and even enthusiasm, with which they have welcomed his stories. Thousands have been interested, many have been deeply moved, and all, the writer trusts, have had their lives either brightened, purified, or elevated by the perusal.

That this result, considering the nature of the subject, has not been accomplished without much care and concern on the part of the author, the readers may have already divined. Literature of this class must be a mighty power for good or for evil. A writer who exalts an active cut-throat into a hero, who makes robbery appear a comic pleasantry, and the life of a thief a succession of noble triumphs, is himself a criminal—a pest to society—a scoundrel whose reward should be the hulks or prisons he is helping to fill. That this has not been the line I have followed, I have had the pleasing satisfaction of learning from many readers in this country, as well as from others in far distant parts, to whom my books appear to have drifted.

I had fully intended, when this volume was published, that it should be the last; but in view of the very gratifying reception accorded to the work by the public and the press, and yielding to many requests addressed to the publishers and myself, I hope to produce, sometime in 1881, a third series of these romances of real life.

JAMES M'GOVAN.

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HUNTED DOWN.



HUNTED DOWN.

I HAVE now to introduce to my readers three individuals whose characters were so powerfully marked, and whose actions were so closely linked, that for long I have put off alluding to them, not at all sure of my ability to grapple with the various details, and convey to the reader even a faint idea of the excitement, trouble, and danger involved in the detection of their crimes. In the sketch entitled "The Story of a Bullet," in a former work,* allusion is made to a daring criminal who became one of the most determined hunters of thieves that ever trod these streets: that man was Hugh M'Indoe. I do not mean that he turned detective or policeman: I mean hunter of thieves in the most fierce and remorseless sense that it is possible to convey by words. The story of the man is suggestive; and there is a deep interest not only about his sharp conversation, but about the whole of the exciting string of events that followed.

Near the head of Leith Wynd there stood a block of houses called "The Happy Land," afterwards notorious through tumbling down with its wretched inmates, and crushing and killing several in its ruins; and in this land, shortly after the scattering of Macluskys' gang, there gathered a number of my "bairns," who for boldness and activity would have passed for a gang, had we only been able to spot out any one as the head. That there was a leader—active, talented, and daring in the extreme—we had not the shadow of a doubt. Robberies were committed which no common criminal could have planned, and which could have been carried out only by the most systematic allotment of tasks to the various members, while counterfeit coin came floating about under our very noses, so cleverly passed that not a trace of the "smashers" but the bits of plated

* *Brought to Bay; or, Experiences of a City Detective.*

pewter laid before us was discoverable. Shoplifting, too, of the swiftest and cleanest, was reported every other day ; and a few of these cases in a vague way directed our eyes to the " Happy Land," and at the same time sent us prying and questioning at some of the captured members as to the name and identity of their leader.

Here, however, we were astonished to learn that the gang were themselves nearly as ignorant as the police. They had a leader, who planned the work in all its details, and also got them out of scrapes when such a thing was possible ; but he was known only to a select few. He never consorted or lived with them ; and always came in disguise and departed in the same way, sometimes in women's clothes, but more generally disguised as an old man, with a stooping gait, asthmatic cough, and heavy hoarse voice—assumed, no doubt, like the clothes and wig. No one knew who he was, what was his name, occupation, or even probable age ; but as every one in the gang was under a terrible oath not to pry into things that did not concern them, and as it was to their interest to keep the oath, the identity of the Unknown, up to the time of which I write, remained secure and unchallenged.

Thieves, being often deplorably ignorant, are not without superstition ; and this, with the mystery surrounding the man, the suddenness with which he sometimes dropped upon them, and the swiftness with which he spotted out a delinquent, led them to dub him *The Ruffian*, which, I may explain, in thieves' Latin, simply means the Devil.

Here was a pretty romance to unravel ; and, indeed, however much our interest was excited by the report, I was not sure but the rascals were merely pulling the long bow for our especial benefit ; and I know not how long the mystery might have remained unsolved, had not our curiosity spread to themselves. To explain this, I must now come to Hugh M'Indoe and his connection with the gang.

Hugh M'Indoe had been a blacksmith ; that is, he had nearly finished his apprenticeship to the trade, when he got in tow with a girl on the streets called Kate Jackson, and then went straight downwards till he landed in the profession. The two agreed well together, I am bound to confess, and clung to each other with a devotion and affection I have seldom seen surpassed ; but, after all, they were only thieves, and Kate, as the wife of a thief, was not greatly better than she had been when on the streets. She was faithful to him, that was all.

"You are a great fool, M'Indoe," I said to him one day, as I was walking him up to the Office on suspicion of being concerned in a burglary over in the New Town; "a man of your ability, with a good trade on your finger-ends, to go and mix yourself up with such wretches—to become one of them—hunted, spurned, and despised: it is madness."

"Who hunts me or despises me?" he fiercely retorted.

"I do."

"Oh, you!—that's nothing wonderful, seeing that you're paid for it. I am not shunned either, as you'll find—I have friends."

"Yes, I know all that; there's a gang of you, and a clever man at the head; but you'll find them your worst friends some day, mark my words. I am not paid for saying that, anyhow."

He walked on for some distance in silence. I little thought of it at the time, but my words were sinking deeply into his memory, to burn and glow there like letters of fire when the occasion came to recall them, though at the time they were rapidly effaced; for a pettifogging lawyer was duly sent in by some invisible friend, and he so ingeniously twisted things that M'Indoe was discharged, and the case quashed. The money and wits of The Ruffian had been well expended, and M'Indoe was saved from the power of the law—for the last time, as will now appear.

It happened that of all the members of the gang M'Indoe was the most reckless and sceptical regarding the power and will of their invisible leader. The others feared and quaked; M'Indoe laughed and scoffed. One night, when this recklessness was augmented by drink and anger, they came to an open rupture over the division of some spoil.

"Who is The Ruffian, I should like to know, that he should claim the biggest half of all we take?" he fiercely asked of the conclave, which consisted of two others besides himself and his wife Kate. "This has gone on too long, through your cowardly shuffling and shrinking. Look here! from this night I share fair all round."

"Hush, hush!" cried the other two, starting up and looking fearfully around. "Stow that, for any sake—you never know when he may pop in on us; and I'd rather dance on nothing than risk his vengeance."

"Vengeance be blowed!" returned Hugh M'Indoe. "I've worked for a fair share, and I'll have it; and listen!—I've only

seen The Ruffian once, but the next time I clap my peepers on his ugly face, I'll tear off every fence and disguise about him, and make him stand forth plain John Jones, or whoever he may be, before you !”

The two thieves paled to the lips, and sat staring at him, transfixed with terror and amazement at his audacity.

“Hush !” cried Kate, flitting round to his side, and trying to place her hand on his mouth. “I think I hear some one on the stair.”

“I don't care ! Take off your hand ; let them hear it who please, and peach who like,” defiantly continued M'Indoe. “I'll unmask him before you all, and ask him what he considers a fair share for himself. The mean coward doesn't even risk his own skin in the business. We do all the work, run all the risk, and get next to nothing for our pains. I'll have no more of it !”

“But your oath—you swore never to—”

“I don't care what I swore ; I didn't swear to work for nothing,” continued M'Indoe. “If you are afraid to speak, I am not.”

“Then do you mean to withdraw and work on your own hook ?” cautiously asked one of the thieves.

“No, I don't want that either, though I shall, rather than be swindled. But I am determined to know whom I work for, and what share he considers me worth ; and I will too—I swear it now !”

“You're drunk, Hugh, or you wouldn't let your tongue wag so freely. Do you forget them that have tried that game already, and only burnt their fingers ? How many has he hunted down for a mere cross word ? Take care ; your turn may come.”

“Let him try it. I'm soft and quiet ; but I'm a devil when I'm roused,” returned M'Indoe. “Let any one injure me or mine without cause, and I'll show them a thief's vengeance. I only want justice, which you pitiful sneaks are afraid to ask. Bah ! I'm ashamed of you !”

“Well, we can send word to him, and hear what he says ; but stow your whids ; think what you like, but keep it to yourself. I say it for your own good,” said the other ; and with this the angry discussion ceased.

But not a word of the threat was lost. Whether The Ruffian had actually overheard the words, or they had been conveyed to him, I know not ; but certain it is that they reached

his ears, and as certain that they thoroughly alarmed him. He was seen no more about the Happy Land, and became even more cautious in his communications with the gang. It is true that all the concessions demanded by M'Indoe were freely granted, but if the rash thief believed on that account that all was still right between them he was frightfully mistaken. The subtle villain was not to be slighted with impunity; M'Indoe had threatened his safety, and was marked out for punishment swift and sure. The plot was ingenious, and might have deceived one more suspicious than M'Indoe. What the plot was may be seen from the following communication to the gang, which I shall translate as closely as possible from the original :—

“The house No. — **Lauder Road** is at present unoccupied. One man may lift all that is to carry, and will be less likely to attract attention than two or more. M'Indoe is best suited for the job, and shall have one-third for his share. The best entrance is at the back—the door leading in from the green to the kitchen. It is only a common lock, with one slight bolt inside, which can be easily driven in. There is no plate; but in the library and drawing-room there is plenty of stuff worth lifting. Let it be done to-night, not later than twelve nor sooner than eleven. **THE RUFFIAN.**”

The same forenoon that brought the above to the Happy Land, and set M'Indoe scouring and polishing at his tools, brought the following curious note to me at the Office :—

“**MR M'GOVAN**,—Sir—I have often been struck with admiration at your activity and energy in your profession. I am compelled to withhold my name on the present occasion, but assure you that it is not without a hope that some day we may be better acquainted. I have to inform you that to-night, between the hours of eleven and twelve, that private dwelling, No. — **Lauder Road**, will be broken into from behind by professional thieves. The door leading from the kitchen to the green will be first attacked, so behind that you had better plant your men. **A FRIEND.**”

This precious bit of treachery was not written with a pen, but for greater security carefully concocted out of printed words and letters cut out of a newspaper, and pasted in succession on a sheet of paper.

At first I was not sure but the whole was a hoax, coming from some one troubled with more time than he knew what to do with, and a hasty examination of the house indicated seemed to confirm this idea, for the building, though let, was as yet perfectly empty! Now, thieves are not much given to breaking into empty houses, or even to breaking in on the mere chance of finding something; and, after getting the keys with some trouble, and carefully searching the whole house, I could

find nothing but a few painter's pots and the iron grates—neither of which were likely to attract thieves. But, then, I could not but see a business-like firmness in the communication, which not even the carefully-administered sop of flattery at the beginning could hide; and as quarrels and treachery among thieves is not the rarest thing in the world, I at last determined to be on the spot at the time stated. We had nothing to lose, while it was just possible that we might not only capture the housebreakers, but, through their retaliation, lay hands on "A FRIEND" as well.

M'Sweeny and I went out to the Grange alone about ten o'clock, and ensconced ourselves behind the kitchen door, quite prepared for a disappointment. It was not without surprise, then, that about twelve, without any warning, we heard the click of a skeleton key in the lock, then a cautious pressure, and then a rattle, as the key was withdrawn and another inserted. The bolt of the lock shot back at last, and then with a touch of the hand M'Sweeny and I slipped back deeper into the lobby to wait for the next movement. First, the door was tried with a "jemmy;" but as it stoutly resisted, the tool was dropped and a wide-mouthed "jigger" applied to the panel. A few grinding turns of this tool, and a hole was made clean through the wood wide enough to admit the bare hand and arm of a man. We saw the hole against the dim light; saw the hand come through, and, after a struggle, reach the iron bar and undo the fastening; and then we parted, M'Sweeny back into the kitchen, and I into the wash-house opposite. To our surprise only one man entered, and the best of the joke was that, after carefully gathering up his tools, he re-fastened the bar of the door on the inside, and very methodically proceeded to light a dark lantern, which he produced from his pocket; and then I recognised M'Indoe.

A step on either side startled him, and looking up he uttered a shout of surprise, dropped the lantern with a smash on the stone lobby, and instantly backed for the door. But it was closed, and before his hand was on the fastened bolt, he was wrenched back, hustled into the kitchen, and securely handcuffed. Then I turned up the light, and his stricken gaze wandered from one face to the other.

"M'Govan! M'Sweeny! I've been betrayed!" he hoarsely gasped.

"It looks like it," I coolly returned. "Why, man, what on earth sent you here? The house is empty."

"Empty?" he echoed, flushing up, and with a blaze suddenly kindling in his eyes—"Empty?"

"Yes; use your eyes. There is not a stick or a rag in the whole house. We have had to sit on paint-pots while we've been waiting for you."

"Ah, you knew, then, that I was coming?" he cried, with a sudden flash of intelligence and tightening of the lips. "Will you show me the drawing-room and library?"

"What for?" I demanded, not sure but he might try some trickery.

"Never mind what for; but show me them. If I have been betrayed—oh, if I have been betrayed!"

I saw that he was fearfully excited, and at once motioned to M'Sweeny to give him his wish. We led him through every one of the empty rooms; and then a look came into his eyes so fiendish, so remorseless and vengeful, that I hope never again to see the like on human countenance.

"Betrayed—sold—by The Ruffian," he vengefully growled through his set teeth. "And this is only the first stroke. I am to be hunted down. Well, let him; it will be the worst job he ever tried. Take me away; lock me up; give me a year;—five—ten—twenty, if you like; I'll live through it all—live to make him feel it."

"And who is The Ruffian, pray?" I asked, as carelessly as possible.

"I don't know—nobody does; but I will some day. I am patient—oh, so patient! And poor Kate; if he should lay a finger on her he may order his coffin."

"Does he write without a pen, after this fashion?" I asked, holding out the anonymous note of the forenoon before his eyes. "Come now, M'Indoe, you have been betrayed without doubt; but only help us to clap bracelets on The Ruffian, and I give you my word you shall not lose by it."

"I wish I could—I wish to Heaven I could," he said, with an earnestness that astonished me, after he had run his eye fiercely over the strange note. "This is The Ruffian's handiwork, and it is his hate that has worked it out; but you don't know what you ask. He is a man, but not a common man; and if ever you lay your fingers on him, and know you've got him, you'll be cleverer than I take you for. It isn't Jim Maclusky you're dealing with now; you could see him and watch him, and know him and grasp him; but this man's a shadow. O God, if I only had him now!"

"Is it true that he is a Jew, and quite a young man?" I asked, with great eagerness and interest.

"I don't know; it would puzzle his namesake to tell, for he has as many skins as a serpent, and takes a pride in remaining invisible. That's why he has turned upon me; for when he tried to cheat me, I swore before them all to tear the mask from his face—and I would have done it too. But the chance may come again. You may fail; he may even melt away, and disappear without you ever being a bit the wiser; but I, if I only live, will hunt him down from kennel to kennel, from hide to hide—through the country—over the seas—round the world, if necessary, before I give in!"

This wild burst came out with a rush, and a terrible rearing of his handcuffed hands in the darkness, and a deadly gleaming of the eyes that made M'Sweeny shrink back in alarm; but he made no attempt to escape from us or resist in any way, and from that moment he became sullen and taciturn, and would not say another word on the mystery I was so anxious to fathom. As to his companions and their doings, he was a sealed book. *They* had never betrayed him, or injured him; when they did, it would be time enough to retaliate.

He walked quietly between us to the Office, and was locked up; and, to my certain knowledge, during the days that elapsed before his trial, never once opened his lips to speak to any one. The change struck me as curious, for he had been of rather a lively, open nature before, and I thought it boded no good for his easy conviction; but there I was wrong. The moment the charge was read, he pleaded guilty of breaking into a house with intent to steal; and the cause for this politic movement on his part was not far to seek. Directly behind him in Court was his wife Kate with their child in her arms, and I myself heard her cry, in an eager whisper—

"Plead guilty, Hughie; plead guilty."

The sentence was six months' imprisonment, and every one was astonished to see the prisoner rise, and in a subdued and broken voice thank the Judge for the leniency of the sentence.

"There's only one thing I would like," he added in a low tone; "that is, to be allowed to kiss my wife and child—just once, my Lord; and I'll make up for it by good conduct in prison."

The Judge stared in surprise at the once defiant criminal, but nodded assent, and a slight murmur of sympathy ran round

the Court, while M'Indoe turned round between the policemen and embraced his wife and child.

"Good-bye, Kate," he said huskily. "It's only six months; but it'll be the last. When I come out, I'll do as you have long wished: I'll turn square, and work for you with these arms like any other man. I was told the prigs would be my worst friends some day, and they have. Keep your heart up, wife; don't let them hunt you down, and I'll make you happy when I come out."

"God bless you, Hughie, for that!" murmured the wretched-looking waif in reply, bending down and impulsively kissing her atomy of a child. "Tommy will grow up an honest man after all, and will be able to look the world in the face. Good-bye, Hughie—good-bye;" and with another embrace he was off to the cells, while Kate slipped quietly out of the Court and disappeared.

But with that simple and affectionate parting Kate's troubles began. She returned to the miserable hole in the Happy Land which she called her home brimful of hope and pleasant dreams for the future; but the words uttered by M'Indoe at the parting had either been heard or carried, for only a few days had passed when the following edict came from the monster at the head of the concern:—

"M'Indoe is lost to us; going to try the square tack when he gets out. Kate has done it all with her gospel-grinding. I always said she would manage it in the long run. Therefore, as she is a drone and burden on us, and will never work more on the cross—TURN HER OUT, child and all. Let it be done at once, unless you want M'Govan's bracelets clapped on your own wrists.

THE RUFFIAN."

But Kate in the short interval had caught fever, before she had any preparations made for leaving the rookery, and, bad as they were, they could not turn her out thus. For about six weeks she lay there, tended but indifferently, and so warned by scowls and hints as never to trust her child for a moment out of her sight; and the first day that she was able to leave her bed another imperative message from The Ruffian quickened her expulsion. They were not altogether without feeling, though; they merely acted under orders, fearing that, now that their interests ran in different directions, Kate would be better away; and so they made up a little purse for her, and bade her good-bye.

Kate tottered up to the head of Leith Wynd, over thick snow and frozen gutters, with her child wrapped close to her heart,

to look the whole world in the face, but to find in it all not one cheering smile of encouragement. She was now free, free to begin the new life that she had so often pictured to herself, but she had no strong arm to support her, no wise head to advise, no friendly grasp to help her on her way. She was a thief, a branded woman, whom the poorest thought it a virtue to spurn. This woman—this mother—wished to be honest and virtuous; but only when she had staggered up through the cold snow, and looked on the colder faces hurrying past, did she realize that she would have a fight for it. She got a lodging—one of the cheapest—in a wretched hovel in the Canongate, and there she remained as long as her money lasted. But then, as if his vindictive spirit were still unsatiated, The Ruffian sent in another command to her late companions:—

“Kate is trying to get work, and go on the square. If she succeeds, it will only draw a noose round some of your necks—therefore HUNT HER DOWN. Expose her on every hand; watch where she applies for work; she has got no character; *give her one.*”

THE RUFFIAN.

Kate's money ran done, and then she left the lodging and slept, God only knows where. In a fit of desperation she at last trailed wearily into a shirtmaker's on the Bridge, and asked for work. The spruce shopman stared at the woeful figure and sunken eyes with some feeling, but said—

“You must go down to the back, to the workshop, and ask the head cutter.”

Kate thanked the man and left the shop, but as she did so, a dawning of the truth flashed on her mind as she saw one of her late companions walk in and take her place. She got round to the back street to the workshop, but the message had gone down inside quicker than her weary limbs could travel; and the first glance of the man as she made her inquiry froze the blood in her veins.

“Are you not a thief?” he sternly asked. “Go, as quick as you like; you are known, and the police may be after you.”

She was out with a scream, flying up the steep street as if fiends and not police were at her heels. At the top she ran full against the woman who had betrayed her. She neither cried nor stormed, but with a strange calmness beckoned the woman to her side, and forced her to look down on the sleeping child resting in her bosom.

“You have done it,” she said softly. “You have hunted me down, and he will grow up to curse you for it. Go away!

You are a woman in shape, but in heart you are a devil. Poot wee Tommy! I'm afraid he'll grow up to be a thief, and to hear his mother hooted at after all."

The woman was moved in spite of herself, and faintly muttered something about acting under orders; but the words were never heard, for Kate had wrapped her child closer to her breast and trailed wearily away. Down the High Street she went, followed no more, but now heedless and unconscious of the fact. Later in the day she had gone into a draper's in the Canongate and asked for work. The man refused, but noticed a wildness in her manner, and told her to leave the shop, without missing the two shirts she had lifted and hidden under her shawl. Hunger now forced her on, but at a pawnshop further down she met with a terrible check. The man stared searchingly at the hungry face, and still more searchingly at the goods, and pointedly asked her where she got them. The one word, the look even, was enough, and she was out like a flying ghost, leaving them in his hands, down, down, and away till she was crouching in a dark entry near the foot of the Canongate. Two or three persons in the stair noticed the crouching figure, but none interfered; and about ten o'clock at night it disappeared. She had gone into a little dairy close at hand, holding out her child in her arms, and saying in wild entreaty—

"For God's sake, give my wee laddie a drink of milk! he's had nothing since yesterday."

The milk was freely given, and a couple of cakes along with it, and then she had hurried back to the shelter of the entry, but only to be driven out by the policeman on the beat. He told her to go to the Night Asylum, but she gave not the slightest sign of having heard him, but limped off, away down past Holyrood towards the Queen's Park. Out in the snow, away up on the white hillside, under the shelter of the great frowning rocks: no one could interfere with her there, or hunt her down, or tell her to move on, or laugh at her, or taunt her with her wickedness or poverty. The blinding snow-flakes fell faster and faster, but they seemed to lie softly and kindly, giving her the shelter and covering that all the earth had refused. But it was fearfully cold, and dread for her treasure made her tear her shawl into strips to wrap round the child's limbs. Then she cuddled herself closely round it, crouching to keep the wind from him, and huddling closer to the rock to keep out the drift. And the dim moon looked down pity-

ingly on the lonely pair, and the drift hurried in faster and faster to complete its work, and then, under the soft white mantle, poor Kate fell asleep for ever.

She was found thus near morning by one of the park-rangers, frozen stiff as a stone. The child was still alive when they were found; but it also died on the second day from the effects of the exposure. Poor Kate! no stone marked her grave, and the only notice taken of her death was a brief newspaper paragraph under the heading, "Woman found dead in the Queen's Park."

A few months after, M'Indoe was set at liberty. He was in the highest spirits; and on bidding the governor of the prison farewell, and thanking him for his kindness and good advice, assured him that he had resolved that that should be his last imprisonment for theft, and that he and his wife would henceforth lead a new and better life.

At the head of the North Bridge he stumbled against one of the gang, who no sooner recognised him than he tried to slip away without a word. But M'Indoe was not to be eluded. He collared the man, and dragged him bodily into the nearest public-house, and there put the one vital question—

"Where is Kate?"

The man paled, shuffled, and shrank, but made no reply.

"Where's Kate and Tommy, and how are they all, and how have they fought through it?" repeated M'Indoe, with growing alarm. "Speak, man."

"Have you not heard anything?" asked the man, without looking him in the face.

"How could I? I'm not five minutes out," was the hurried rejoinder. "Tell me, man—she's not ill, is she?"

"No, she's not ill," dubiously returned the cowering criminal; "but I'd rather not say anything about her. Good-day;" and he tried to rush out of the shop, but was nearly strangled in the attempt.

"Tell me what's wrong at once," cried M'Indoe, in desperation. "Do it, or I'll throttle you."

"Well, I'm afraid you'll be cut up about it," slowly answered the thief, in tones that were like a funeral knell to all M'Indoe's hopes; "and I'd rather take half a stretch in quod than have to tell you it. Both Kate and wee Tommy's dead."

"Dead—dead—dead?"

The three words came out in incredulous gasps, and M'Indoe was staggering back white as a ghost as he uttered them.

"Yes ; she took the fever, and wasn't over strong when The Ruffian made us turn her out. Then she tried the honest dodge, saying that you meant to be square when you came out ; and it might have worked, only The Ruffian—"

"Ay, The Ruffian—tell me about him," gasped M'Indoe, in a half-stupefied tone.

"Well, he had her hunted down ; told every one what she was, made them ask for her character, and so on ; and then, poor lass, she prigged something, and was got lying dead in the Queen's Park."

"And this you, you fiends—whom I never injured by word or deed—helped to do ?" cried M'Indoe, waking up as from a dream.

"Not I," answered the thief, shrinking back. "If I'd only known Kate was in trouble or want, I'd have chopped off my hand sooner than let her perish. No ; Ruffian or no Ruffian, orders or no orders, I'd have saved her."

"It matters not. Words—words are nothing !" cried the bereaved man, rising and towering like an avenger above the other. "I am alone in the world, with all my hopes blasted. You have killed my wife among you—my Kate, that was all the world to me—and my wee bairn, that was innocent as the angels in heaven. Oh ! had you no mercy ? Could you not have spared them and let me suffer ? Listen to me ! I'll have life for life—hunting for hunting ! I swear by all that is sacred to live for but one object—to tear the mask from The Ruffian, and to hunt him off the face of the earth. And not him alone—all of you !—all, all, all !—not a thief shall escape—every one shall feel a thief's power—a thief's vengeance !"

As M'Indoe screamed forth this wild, threatening burst, his hands slackened their grasp on the man before him ; he gasped and choked for breath ; and, taking advantage of the moment, the other wrenched himself free, and dashed out of the shop and disappeared.

A few moments after, the waiter entered the box, and found M'Indoe stretched on the floor in a faint. Fearing some foul play, the lad called in the police, and with great difficulty M'Indoe was brought round. But not one word would he speak against any one. He stretched himself up, moaning and wringing his hands, and then drew on his cap, thanked them for their kindness, and abruptly quitted the shop. When next we heard of him, he had started to work at his trade at a smithy in the Horse Wynd, and appeared to have changed from a violent

and reckless thief into a quiet, inoffensive working man. That was the outside. But inside, what was there?—slumbering fire—vengeance nursed—hate cherished as a sole passion and incentive to hard labour. He worked hard, early and late, and lived like a miser, and thus began to save money. How was that money to be spent? I will try to answer the question before concluding this volume.

A THIEF TRAPPING A THIEF.

I HEARD of the change in M'Indoe's mode of life ; but not knowing thoroughly at the time the overwhelming causes that had been at work to bring it about, I placed little reliance on its continuance. It is common for an honest man to turn thief, but very uncommon for a thief to turn "square." But in this case I was agreeably disappointed. Hugh M'Indoe kept at it, week after week, month after month, till my admiration was excited, and I tried to get into conversation with him. But here another disappointment awaited me. M'Indoe's whole manner and nature seemed changed, and now he resolutely shunned society and conversation in every form. He worked like a slave, hardly ever spoke, saw no one, and, when not working or sleeping, spent the few remaining moments of his time in wandering gloomily through our darkest wynds and closes. I used to meet him thus at all hours—very late at night, and very early in the morning—so much so that I sometimes faintly wondered to myself if he ever found time to sleep ; but upon these occasions he invariably avoided me, gliding past me stern and silent, more like a dark shadow than a living, breathing man. One night, however, to my surprise, he did not go past, but gripped me hard and fast by the arm.

"I haven't forgotten you, Jamie M'Govan," he said in a fierce whisper. "I never forget anything. All your words came back on me like a judgment ; would to God I had believed them when you spoke ! I may give you some work one o' these nights. I have waited and watched so long and so patiently ; and sometimes, if it had not been for my hard work, I think I should have gone mad. But I mean to begin soon—soon !"

"Begin what, Hughie ?" I asked, peering curiously into his face, not quite certain but that his troubles had touched his brain.

"To hunt them down !" he hoarsely cried, gripping my arm harder than ever, and fiercely waving the other hand

through the darkness. "They took my Kate and my wee Tommy, hunted them down, killed them, and left me lone and desolate. By the laws of God and man, they deserve to be punished, routed out, scattered like chaff before the wind, and I will do it."

"I am very sorry—," I began.

"I know you are ; but don't speak of them, it makes me mad !" he cried, with a look of anguish. "But, remember my words. They think I've forgotten all, and settled down tamely to a new life. Let them think so ; let them dream of security till they find me down on them like a wolf. Good-bye. Don't notice me in the street."

With this incoherent roll of words, he was off, leaving me confused and uncertain, but still knowing enough to pity him keenly. How I next saw him brings me directly to the subject of this sketch.

A few days after, a most remarkable railway robbery was reported to us at the Central Office. It seemed that one of our large jeweller firms in Princes Street, having executed an order for a number of silver cups and other smaller prizes for a Glasgow Flower Show, had safely packed the whole in a tin box or casket made specially for them, and secured with two small padlocks, and consigned the whole to the railway for conveyance, after duly notifying to the recipients the exact hour and train by which they might be expected. This happened to be a few weeks before Christmas, when nearly every train was overcrowded with parcels, and, in consequence, the tin box was crowded, along with a great number more of parcels and boxes, into the guard's break-van. This place had shelves round three sides for the systematic arrangement of parcels with regard to their destinations, and on the lowest of these shelves was placed the heavy tin box, wrapped in brown paper, and, after a fashion considered wise by jewellers, bearing no mark to indicate the valuable nature of its contents. The guard knew it was there, for he had lifted it in off the hurly with his own hands, and distinctly remembered saying as he did so, "That's a heavy one ;" but afterwards box after box and parcel after parcel arrived, till he was completely shut away from the spot. As soon as the train was in motion, he lifted the lantern and carefully turned its glare on every shelf in the van, and was afterwards firmly of opinion not only that the tin box was there exactly where he had placed it, but that no one but himself could possibly be secreted in the van ; then he

placed the lantern at the very end of the shelf, with its glare turned on the break-wheel, which principally occupied his attention during the remainder of the journey.

And yet, when the train ran into Glasgow, and the jeweller's order of consignment was presented at the very van door, the box was gone!

The guard, pale and perspiring at the discovery, was hard to convince of the truth.

"I know it's here somewhere," he said feverishly, shining the lantern into every nook and corner, and wildly turning over boxes and parcels of every kind in the vain search. "I know it, because I put it there myself."

Every parcel and box was turned out, counted, and compared with the book; every one was safe but that most eagerly sought for and demanded: the tin box was gone. The loss was too serious to be borne tamely, and instantly a telegram of inquiry was despatched to Edinburgh, to ascertain if the box might not have been left behind. The reply settled all. It was simply, "The guard knows that he got it." Suspicion was at once excited. "What was easier," reasoned the despoiled owners, "than for the guard, knowing the value of the tin case, to drop it bodily out of the van to some confederate at a lonely part of the way? The whole thing was clear as day—arrest him!"

Arrested accordingly he was, and then his memory became quickened regarding a strange incident on the way. His statement—which, I regret to say, was coolly set down as an absurd romance of his own concoction—was, that when the train was about half-way, an unusual noise at the other end of the van caused him to start round in the midst of reading something out of a torn scrap of newspaper. The light was uncertain, being, as I have stated, turned full on the break-wheel; but the momentary impression of the guard was, that he saw a head—that of a man, clothed in a fur cap—dive down from inspecting the lower shelves, and hide behind the litter of boxes on the floor. Slightly startled, but almost certain that his eyes had deceived him, the guard turned and leant over the boxes to peer down behind, but saw nothing to confirm the momentary glimpse. What he might have seen had he lifted the lantern, and turned its glare full down into the darkness, is quite another thing. However, his impression was that no one lay hidden behind the boxes, and that the missing box was then still on the shelf where he himself had placed it.

In this state the case was laid before us, and it mystified us

thoroughly. Even allowing the strange story of the guard to be true, how was it possible for a fur-capped man to get into the van without being seen, and then get out again bearing a heavy box, with the train going at full speed and a watchful guard never out of the van? True, the van had two doors—one on each side; but then the one not in use was securely locked, with the upper half or window, it was said, firmly secured on the inside; and even supposing the guard's back to be turned and his hearing dulled while engaged at the break-wheel, it could have been only by an exercise of the most surprising agility that a man could have darted out from behind the boxes, swung out through the window, and escaped.

While we were thus puzzling ourselves, and the case looking very dark for the poor guard, the report of the affair got into the papers, and set another a-thinking as well. That other was Hugh M'Indoe. The daring and clean manner in which the robbery had been effected he could attribute to but one cause—the personal presence and skill of his invisible enemy, The Ruffian. Now was the time to strike! the very thought of it sent a thrill of wild delight and fierce excitement through his veins. But how was the mystery to be laid bare and the thief hunted down? After long and deep thought he decided to employ a second hand—a thief, it is true, but one blessed with an utter absence of scruples of any kind. This was Simon Penbank, the third of the three characters I promised to introduce. Simon Penbank was a seedy, shabby-genteel beggar, or loafer, or thief—whichever best suited him for the moment. He was the coolest customer, I believe, that it is possible to meet with anywhere. To revile him as a thief, a swindler, a cheat, or a liar, was only to praise him, and, far from exciting his anger, would only call forth his thanks in shape of a neat little speech; for, having been a man of some education, he was exact and perspicuous in his language to a nicety. Nothing could disturb him. He lived in a world of his own, treacherous as water and false as Satan in all his dealings, with a crave for drink perfectly insatiable; and I believe, if he had actually been brought to the gallows, he would have surveyed the crowd with a benign look, urbanely offering his arm to the chaplain in ascending the scaffold, with some cool remark about the character of the weather or the density of the crowd.

This was the man to whom M'Indoe turned for help. He hunted him out in his favourite haunt, a low public-house in

the Cowgate, and sternly repressing all his fulsome demonstrations of friendship, opened up his business.

Simon Penbank looked grave indeed till the mention of the word "money," when every pimple on his face instantly glowed with enthusiasm in the new cause.

"Sir," he said, attempting to seize and shake M'Indoe's hand, "I shall be most happy to serve you."

"As long as my money lasts!" bitterly rejoined the reformed thief.

Penbank opened his eyes to their widest.

"Exactly," he said, with the utmost coolness. "You surely did not for a moment suppose otherwise? I am a creature of circumstances. To-day I serve you; you pay me; all good and well. To-morrow I turn my attention to some one else, some one with less skill or cunning than myself, from whom I steal, beg, or borrow, and so get through the day in comfort and peace. Next day I may—ah, who can foretell the exigencies of life?—I may betray you, should any one richer bid for you or your possessions. Sad necessity! none would lament it more than myself."

"I understand you perfectly," calmly replied M'Indoe; "I knew your worth before I decided to employ you. You may begin when you like to betray me. I have nothing to lose now."

"Nay, that does not follow," quickly rejoined the seedy villain, softened a little in spite of himself by the look of agony which crossed the dark face before him; "it is not probable that I shall betray you, it is only possible. You see, I live from hand to mouth, from day to day, exacting tribute alike from friend and foe. My plan is much derided by the world, but it is philosophy, it is life. Can you blame me?"

"No, for I wish you to follow out your own principles, and help me to capture The Ruffian," quickly answered M'Indoe.

Simon Penbank paled to the tip of his red nose, and, starting up and looking fearfully around, laid a finger impressively on his lip.

"I didn't say that," he whispered, with a shiver. "No, I didn't say I would meddle with The Ruffian."

"What have you to fear, man? It is I who run the risk, if there is any; you are only to be the spy or go-between. At any rate, you will try to discover the author of this robbery, the means used, and fate of the plunder?"

"I will—if you pay me well. But I think you are wrong in

supposing the active hand to be The Ruffian's. No; he's too wise to incur the risk: he might plan it, indeed, but the actual worker is more likely to be Mizzling Scroby, and you know he wears a fur cap when at work."

"Well, he too shall be hunted down!" fiercely returned M'Indoe, for a moment forgetting himself. "He and his wife were the most active in hunting down poor Kate; turn about is fair play."

"If it is Scroby, I shall help you with all my heart," vengefully rejoined Simon Penbank, fumbling excitedly with the lapel of his seedy black coat, as was his habit when roused. "The ignorant brute had once the audacity to insult me—me, who am so immeasurably his superior."

Little more passed between them. Some money went from the hand of Hugh M'Indoe into the other's pocket. Simon laid his hand on his heart, raised the shabby hat on his head, and made his politest bow; and so they parted.

But Penbank was as active as he was needy, and only a few nights after the above compact he burst in upon Hugh M'Indoe, breathless with the unwonted exertion, and brimful of information.

"Speak, man, speak!" cried M'Indoe, as the seedy spy coughed and choked before him, apparently unable to get out a single word. "What have you discovered?"

Simon Penbank raised his eyes, held out his open hand, and suggestively scraped the palm with the tips of his fingers.

"Oh, you want money first?" hurriedly continued M'Indoe, thrusting some coins into his hand at random. "I might have known it—greedy as the grave."

"Greedier—much greedier," coolly corrected the seedy spy, as he pocketed the money. "The grave exacts but occasional mouthfuls; I am incessantly on the crave."

"The news?—the news? Don't chatter, but out with it."

"Well, The Ruffian planned the railway lift, and Scroby worked it out."

"How?"

"Simply enough. It was announced in the papers that Messrs — were to make the prize cups, and The Ruffian had the shop watched for some days before they were sent off. Scroby got in by the other side of the van while the guard was chatting on the platform before the train started, and then threw out the box before they were half-way, and got out after it by the window while the guard was looking out at the other

at some signals they were passing. Scroby hurt his knee and face in jumping off the train, but he was well enough to go back and pick up the tin box, which he buried till next day, when they sent for it and squared up."

"And where's the plunder?"

"All through the melting-pot and off to Glasgow, except two or three of the smaller things, which may be stalled here for more money."

"Good, good! that'll do!—one article would do for that part, so that it can be identified as belonging to the plunder," feverishly returned M'Indoe. "Now here is your work, and you must say at once decidedly whether you will do it or not. If you deal double with me, it shall be the last time for a stretch of twenty years that you will cheat anybody. Ay, flush up as you like, I'm in earnest, nay, desperate; but so long as you do my bidding for a fair price, you have nothing to fear from me. Did the others but know what hangs over them, they would give something for the privilege of changing places with you."

Simon Penbank humbly laid the rim of his shabby hat against his left breast and bowed low. For once in his life he had met his match. He leered up in astonishment at the changed character before him, and mingled with that astonishment was now a wholesome amount of cringing fear.

"What I want you to do is to go to Scroby and tell him you have found a gentleman willing to buy all the stuff that has not gone through the melting-pot—a gentleman fond of such nick-nacks, and not over particular as to where they come from."

"Risky, but good. Planning power above average," said Simon Penbank approvingly, as if making a mental estimate of his employer's intellect. "Well, what next?"

"Next, you must get him to conceal the things about his person in some way, and come to the Clamshell Stair, in the High Street, at twelve o'clock to-night exactly, to meet the gentleman and make the bargain."

"Good again, with the exception of one little flaw," approvingly returned the seedy spy. "Suppose the 'gentleman' should make a mistake, and nab me as well?"

"The gentleman will *not* nab you. I have already given you my word to that effect, and with me that is as good as an oath," calmly returned M'Indoe. "I'm glad you understand me. The Ruffian shall follow, though I should die in the act of striking him. You bear him no good-will either, I'll swear?"

Simon Penbank shuffled and changed colour at the dreaded name.

"I don't know," he uneasily answered, speaking in a cautious whisper. "If it could be *safely* done, I don't deny but I would like to help him into quod. But the risk—consider the risk. I have but one skin, and my most ardent desire is to preserve it whole and intact."

This was nearly all their conversation. Some more money changed hands between them, and then they got down from the garret and parted at the head of the Horse Wynd—Penbank to depart on his curious mission, and M'Indoe to take his way up by the back of the College and the Potterrow to my home. It was now near ten o'clock, and the streets were getting empty, but there were still some abroad, who noted curiously the excited gestures and gleaming eyes of the reformed thief as he strode along through the darkness, talking volubly to himself, and waving his clenched hands as if struggling with imaginary foes.

I was at home, comfortably ensconced before a glowing fire, reading a very attractive book, and certainly could not have looked more surprised if a ghost had been ushered into my presence. M'Indoe's face was pale and bloodless, while his sunken eyes shone with a strange light which I had never seen in them before; but he had no smile in reply to mine; he merely motioned me to rise, saying—

"Get on your things and come with me. I am going to put into your hands the man who lifted the prize cups from the railway van last week, with some of the plunder as well. The most of it has gone through the melting-pot, but there's enough left for a conviction."

This speech electrified me in a moment, and I eagerly whipped on my things, questioning him incessantly the while, and getting at part but not all of what I have already narrated. We cut along George IV. Bridge to the Central Office; and long before twelve o'clock had planted ourselves on the first flat of the Clamshell Stair, with two or three auxiliaries on the other side of the street, to close in when the game was trapped.

At twelve o'clock exactly, Penbank and Scroby came out of the Happy Land, and were followed up the High Street by M'Sweeny, Penbank chattering and joking to his victim the whole way, as if treachery with him were only a pleasure. At the bottom of the stair they paused, and M'Sweeny instantly ducked into a close-mouth on the other side of the street.

"Now, I'll bid you good-night, or rather good-morning," cheerfully remarked Simon Penbank, offering the cracksman his hand. "You'll find him on the first flat, and you can make your bargain without me."

"Stop," growled Scroby, clutching him hard by the arm; "you're not the safest cove in the world. There might be a screw loose, so just come up wi' me and introduce us;" and as he forcibly drew the slender arm of the traitor within his own and dragged him up the steps, there was nothing for Simon Penbank but to hide his fear under a smiling exterior and obey.

At the top of the first stair, in the thick darkness, M'Indoe touched the cracksman on the arm.

"The things—where are they?" he said, in his ordinary tones, but changed indeed from when Scroby had known them.

"Here," unsuspiciously answered Scroby, fumbling in his pockets, and producing an exquisitely finished silver bird, resting on a tiny bunch of flowers; then an inkstand, set on a solid block of cairngorm, and then a number of smaller articles. "That's the lot: yours for ten quid."

M'Indoe put forth his hands and grasped, not the jewellery, but the throat of the astonished cracksman.

"Now, cruel, merciless monster, I have you at last!" he almost screamed; and at the same moment I turned back the slide of the lantern in my hand, and Scroby, with his eyes almost starting from his head, dropped the plunder nervously on the stone stair.

"Trapped!" he gasped; and then, with a great wrench, he tried to break free, but at the moment it was not a man but a demon that held him, and he might as well have tried to batter down Salisbury Craigs with his bare fists. M'Indoe's grasp at his throat tightened and tightened till there was some danger of the burglar being strangled on the spot. Simon Penbank looked on with a smile, cheerfully rubbing his hands.

"Better give in, Scroby," he advised. "It's Hugh M'Indoe, and you know what he owes you; please to consider yourself nabbed."

"Curse you!" roared the captured thief, as I snapped the handcuffs on his struggling wrists, and the others swarmed up the stair from outside and surrounded us. "Curse you, you've betrayed me!"

"Betrayed you?" echoed Penbank, coolly opening his eyes, and perking himself up to his highest. "Betrayed you? Of course I have."

"Traitor, aren't you ashamed of yourself?" continued Scroby.

"Ashamed of myself?" echoed the seedy spy, looking from face to face as if for an explanation of the word. "Sir, I rejoice to say that shame is a thing utterly unknown to me."

"Never mind; I'll pay you back for it some day," breathed the other.

"I think not," was the placid reply. "This little affair will be at least a tenner to you, and before that period has elapsed, in all probability I will be gathered to my fathers."

"You may hope so, for if you're not, *I'll gather you!*" vengefully cried the thief, as we lugged him down the stair, after picking up the valuable plunder. "But don't build yourself up too much; I have friends who will help me out, and when they do, my first visit will be to your traitor's carcase."

The seedy spy placed his hat on his breast and bowed low.

"I shall be honoured by your visit," was his cool rejoinder; and then he walked away, humming cheerfully to himself, while Scroby was taken in and locked up.

But, cool and unconcerned though he continued to appear, Penbank was in reality set on the fidget by Scroby's threat, and kept prowling anxiously about the Head Office and down the close behind, into which looked the barred windows of the Lock-up, in a way that seemed very amusing to me. The very night after the capture, as a quick cut for home, I was darting down the close, when I caught sight of a grim figure in the shade of a common stair, facing the windows of the Lock-up, and a low whistle arrested my steps and drew me to his side, when I recognised Penbank.

"What on earth are you doing here?" I asked. His reply was to point to a narrow grated window in the Lock-up.

"Do you see that window?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Do you know who's in there?"

"Upon my soul I do not."

"Then I'll tell you; it's Scroby."

"Well, what of that?"

"Nothing; only I'm watching him."

I laughed heartily.

"And what good will that do you?" I asked, still smiling.

"Never mind," he darkly returned. "I'll tell you after he's tried. Good-night."

Off I ran, wondering at his tone of offended dignity, and

soon forgot all about the odd meeting. Before many hours had elapsed, however, I was reminded of it with a vengeance, and in this wise—

About one o'clock M'Indoe had been roused up in his garret by a thundering knock at the door, and the moment he had opened it, in rushed Simon Penbank, looking considerably more excited than was his wont.

"Well, what's up?" he roughly demanded.

"The string is, and the files after it!" cried the breathless spy. "You laughed at me before, but come and see for yourself. I don't know how they had got the string in, but I saw it come dangling down, with a bit of line to sink it, and then out darted The Ruffian—I am certain it was he—fastened on the files and message, and then cut down the close and disappeared. He must be gone for a rope, for Scroby is tearing away like mad at the bars with the file. Come on, and we may take them both!"

Five minutes after, a thundering succession of knocks roused me out of a dreamless slumber; and thinking the house was afire, I ran to the door in my night-shirt, and then recognised M'Indoe as he grasped my hand and hoarsely whispered—

"On with your things, and fly along to the Office by George IV. Bridge! It's to capture The Ruffian! Quick!"

He was gone like a flash; and after a minute I found myself dressed, and tearing along to the Office through the empty streets as fast as I could run. I reached the Office, found M'Indoe in waiting, and listened to Penbank's story. Five men were all we could get together in the Office, but these were all hardy and reliable, and one by one slipped away down the close behind, and silently took up the positions I had allotted them. Penbank and M'Indoe occupied the common stair already mentioned, exactly opposite Scroby's cell, and there I joined them. For fully a minute after every sound of my footsteps had died away, I could hear or see nothing of a suspicious nature. Penbank's ear was quickest.

"S—st! there it's again!" he whispered; and then we distinctly heard the scrape, scraping of a file overhead, and even fancied we could faintly discern the steady movement of the tool itself. The close itself was silent as the grave, and no one passing carelessly down could have dreamt that eight men lurked there ready to pounce on the greatest pest that ever slunk through our streets.

Nearly an hour passed in this way, and then a light footfall from below set our hearts a-throbbing. An old man, bent with age, was creeping noiselessly up the close under the shadow of the opposite wall. Patiently and breathlessly we watched him till he was exactly opposite Scroby's cell, when he paused, produced a bulky hank of rope from under his coat, got off the pavement to signal to the worker above, and then suddenly started and held his breath.

I do not know what had startled him : perhaps a shuffle of our feet, a hard-drawn breath, or a gleam of M'Indoe's eyes, which shone red in the dark ; but, determined not to lose him, I whistled sharp and shrill, while M'Indoe and Penbank rushed upon him with a shout, and instantly became a confused mass of struggling limbs. I was following suit, and the hidden men were springing out behind me, when there was a sudden crashing blow, a whisk and a dash ; and then a shadow flew from the spot with such extraordinary speed that we scarcely heard the patter of the swift footsteps.

I could hardly believe my own eyes. The "old" man was gone, leaving the white wig on the ground, along with the coil of rope and the sand-bag with which he had felled M'Indoe, who lay stretched on the ground white and insensible, while Penbank was squirming about yelling "murder," from the effects of a vicious kick he had received in the stomach.

"After him, men ! run for your lives !" I shouted, and then, as their heavy feet clattered away over the stones, I stooped and raised M'Indoe.

He moaned painfully as he opened his eyes, and at first I thought he was seriously hurt ; but his first words re-assured me—

"He struck me down ! another debt added to the list. Curses on it ! where were your eyes and hands ?"

"Where they are now," I replied, helping him to his feet.

"Yes, gripping the wrong man," he bitterly rejoined.

"Never mind," I cheerfully returned, "they are after him now ; he may be brought in in ten minutes."

"Ten fiddlesticks ! You'll not see him again for months. Oh, what a chance we've lost !"

"It may come again," I remarked.

"May ?—it shall !" he shouted, with gleaming eyes ; "I live for it."

I helped him home in silence after getting his head doctored at the Office, and saw him no more till the day of Scroby's trial.

The men I had sent in pursuit of The Ruffian dropped in one by one, utterly exhausted but unsuccessful. In the meantime Scroby had been interrupted in his interesting work, thoroughly searched, and transferred to a cell where all his ingenuity would avail him nothing in any attempt of the kind.

The trial-day came round, and then, with Hugh M'Indoe in the witness-box telling all he knew of Scroby's past life, and the strong evidence of the stolen jewellery besides, we had a clear case; and, in spite of an able defence by a clever lawyer, Scroby was sentenced to ten years' penal servitude. Hugh M'Indoe, in spite of the taunting cross-examination of the prisoner's counsel, was complimented highly by the Court for his dash and daring, as well as for the modest and intelligent manner in which his evidence was given. He flushed up, and, pointing towards Scroby, said simply—

“My Lord, that man is a confirmed thief, and safe only in prison. But bad as you think him, there's another far worse to follow—I mean the man who planned the robbery, and attempted to arrange his escape. I have not accomplished all; I have only begun.”

HUNTING DOWN A LOBBY STRIPPER.

A SINGLE light twinkled from one of these semi-genteel half-flats over in Thistle Street one stormy afternoon in February. Outside, the house looked solemn and respectable as its neighbours; but inside it was stripped as bare as the meanest garret in the Canongate. Every one of the dark rooms was empty; and the lighted one contained little but the sparsely covered sick-bed in the corner. Let us enter softly, for here a man is dying.

A young woman—we might say lady, but for the pinched pallor of her face—sat by the bedside with a sleeping child in her arms, listening with a beating heart to the heavy breathing of her husband. He was so young and handsome, with the black hair clustering about his white forehead, that Millie Kirkland could not believe him dying, or even seriously ill. The pink spot on either cheek gave his face a look of beauty and health which she thought had not been there for many a day. Suddenly a blast of hail against the window frame awoke the sick man, and with a slight start he opened his eyes.

“Millie, Millie, are you there?” he faintly whispered, without moving his body, but groping in a blind way with his hands.

“Here, Hugh, dear!” and she instantly bent over him and kissed his lips. “How do you feel now?”

“Weak—very weak,” was the slow reply. “You will go to your father when—when—”

A great pang at the young wife’s heart almost choked the words rising to her lips.

“When what, dear?”

“When I’m asleep; I feel as if I could fall asleep and never wake again,” faintly breathed the sick man. “But you will go for the child’s sake, and tell him that the poor clerk who dared to marry his daughter forgave him for hunting him out of situation and home. Say that, Millie, and that I’m gone, and he’ll forgive you and shelter you.”

A blank silence and then a wild burst of tears followed the

painfully enunciated words. Then the young wife hastily bent forward and placed the warm cheek of the child against the sick man's face.

"No, no ! you will live for the child !" she wildly exclaimed, wreathing one arm desperately about him. "The warm spring is coming, the dreadful cough will leave you, the balmy days will put strength into your limbs, and the kindly flowers will see you once more strong and happy."

A long sigh was the only answer, and the sick man faintly groped with his weak hand till his fingers touched her tear-wet face.

"O Millie," he got out at last, "don't make the parting worse. When the flowers come, they will be bending over my grave."

The exertion and excitement were almost too much for him. For some moments Millie had to hold him up in her arms while he writhed and struggled with the cough that was fighting for his life. Yet when he breathed once more, and lay back with the heavy dew on his brow, there was a faint smile on his lips.

"The wrong will end when I am gone," he whispered, with a fearful effort. "We did wrong to defy your father ; but I am glad that all the punishment has fallen upon me."

He appeared to sink into a gentle slumber after these words ; but what startled the poor young wife was that, though unconscious, his eyes were not closed. For some moments she hung over him, with her heart almost standing still, and then with a wild cry she screamed—

"Hughie ! Hughie ! look up ! Say that you know me !"

The breathing flickered, but a faint look of intelligence came back into the eyes, and, bending over the lips, she could just hear the whisper—

"Millie ! kiss me !—your father—go—remember."

A few minutes later, the whole land rang with the screams of a new-made widow. She had rushed out with her child in her arms to tell her tale of grief to the neighbours. They heard her gravely and solemnly, but the only one who offered real sympathy was a poor washerwoman living in a dark ground floor at the foot of the stair. Taking the child from its distracted mother, she soothed her as best she could, and gently led her back to the desolate home.

"Puir lassie, ye're young yet, and it's yer first great trial," she said, after performing unasked the last kind offices to the still form. "But dinna greet, dinna greet ! for ye've aye yer

bairnie left. I ken what it is ; I've lost my man, an' five bonnie bairns—a' gaen to heaven afore me—but you have ane left ; and the puir wee lambie looks as if it wad need a' yer care."

The young widow started and looked into the child's face in alarm.

"No, no, he is well enough," she said through her tears ; "but we have been so poor—so very poor—and my husband has been ill so long ; but that will all end now. My father is rich, and if I but tell him all he will surely be melted—"

Tears choked off the rest ; and after spending an hour with her in simple homely consolation, the old woman went back to her work, after abruptly refusing anything in shape of payment.

Millie sat in the dimly-lighted room with a great void in her heart, which it seemed as if nothing would ever fill. Away far below her she could see the lights of a thousand homes, yet she felt more alone than if she had been cast away on a trackless ocean. Yet the simple words of the poor washerwoman had entered her soul, and planted there a germ of trust and faith ; and looking up at the dark sky, she thought, not of the pitiless storm dashing against the window-panes, but of one now waiting for her far above storm and stars. Then came the remembrance of his last words ; and after an hour's thought and determined fighting with herself, she rose, wrapped the child and herself in the square folds of a faded shawl, locked up the house, and slowly fought her way towards one of those princely mansions at the west end, which had been before her mind almost constantly since her husband had mentioned the name of her father.

Yes, strange as it may appear, Millie Kirkland was a lady by both birth and education, and was thus tasting the deepest poverty and grief within a quarter of a mile of the luxurious home she had given up two years before. Yet, urgent as was her want, it is probable that, but for the dying injunction of her husband, she would never have dreamed of going near the stately house ; and though the wind, sweeping round the lonely crescent, caught her slender figure and drove her for shelter against the very door she sought, she trembled and hesitated to ring the bell. Two years make such a change on people, and her father had never since her marriage shown himself conscious of her existence, except by vengefully getting her husband deprived of his situation in an insurance office. A slight cry from her child decided her wavering resolution ; and a faint

tinkling of the bell was answered by a servant whom she had never before seen.

Millie shrank for a moment before the glaring light and curious eyes, and then with a desperate strength she stammered out—

“Is Mr Fullerton at home ; and could I see him ?”

“He is not at home,” mechanically answered the servant, at the same time trying to close the door on both storm and waif.

“I know what that means,” cried Millie, with flashing eyes. “You mean that you consider me too mean and wretched to be admitted to his presence. Perhaps he will not think so, if you will be good enough to tell him that his daughter Millie wishes to see him upon urgent business. See, I will sit here with my child, and await his answer ;” and, stepping into the lobby before the amazed domestic could say her nay, she calmly seated herself on one of the grim oaken chairs. The door was closed ; and then, with a doubtful look at the shabby visitor, and a still more doubtful look in the direction of the numerous pegs hung with coats, cloaks, and hats, the servant retired. She was some time gone ; and Millie’s eye, wandering wearily along the cloaks hung before her, at last rested with a curious eagerness upon a long cloak of dark blue cloth, trimmed round the cape with fur. With filling eyes she recognised it as one of her own, and rising, she touched it reverently, as a kind of magic wand which seemed to transport her once more into the happy past. A soft step at her back roused her, and starting round, she saw the servant before her, this time with rather more feeling in her manner and deference in her tones.

“Mr Fullerton will see you ; please to come this way.”

Along soft-treading carpets, and through noiselessly shutting doors, they went in silence, till Millie found herself in the library, with an old gentleman looking up at her from his easy chair in surprise and disgust.

Poor Millie ! she had meant to be very calm and even stern in her reproaches ; but the moment the door was closed, and she looked her father in the face, all her resolution vanished, and, drooping faintly towards him, she cried in a choking voice—

“O father ! O father ! Hugh is dead !”

Her convulsive sobs were the only sounds through that comfortable room. Mr Fullerton was a man of iron, and

neither winced nor frowned, but merely trimmed diligently at his nails with an ivory-handled penknife. Presently he looked up, with a hateful sneer on his lips, and with the utmost coolness said—

“Well, he has taken a long time to kill. Is that all?”

“O father! say one kind word to me. I am so lonely and desolate!” ejaculated the weeping girl. “He told me before he died to come and ask your forgiveness—and—and—”

“And made me a present of his widow and child, eh? I suppose there is a child—poor people always manage to get them, though they don’t so easily get food to fill their mouths. Perhaps that bundle of rags in your arms is it? Well, have you anything else to say?”

Millie started up now, and looked at her father curiously and doubtfully, but with blazing eyes that made him wince. He daintily brushed the nail-scrapings from his superfine trousers, affecting not to notice the glance, and, reversing the penknife, calmly began upon the nails of the left hand.

“Is this my father or a devil put in his place?” hoarsely whispered the distracted girl, gathering her child closer to her heart, and shrinking back towards the door, as if fearful that the innocent babe might be contaminated.

“I have reason to believe that I am your father, the same whom you disobeyed two years ago by marrying a miserable clerk,” darkly replied the gentleman, with a cloud crossing his ruddy face. “I hope you have come to beg; nothing would give me greater pleasure than to hear you at it.”

“I did not come to beg, but I came to ask your forgiveness,” cried Millie, with the indignation flashing through her tears. “You hunted down my poor husband, yet with his last breath he forgave you.”

“How kind of him!” sneered the gentleman. “I suppose you will be forgiving me next?”

“I do not know that I will,” hotly burst forth Millie, with a look that made him quail. “I shall try hard to do it; but were you not my own father, I scarcely think I should succeed.”

“Indeed! Perhaps I shall survive the loss,” replied the gentleman, with cutting emphasis. Then rousing himself and casting off every smile, he added, “Listen, woman! A father has his feelings as well as a silly girl. You are mine, or once were; but I hate you! You come asking forgiveness. Well, you shall have it when you and that thing in your arms are lying cold and still as your husband.”

A loud blatter of hail and sleet against the window panes from without was the only audible sound that followed the deadly words. Millie made no reply, but shrank in a fascinated maze backwards to the door. Horror, pity, and shame were equally painted on her face, and these feelings for some moments effectually chained her tongue.

"I am going," she breathed at last; "I shall never trouble you again. Oh, I am so sorry that I came."

"I am glad to hear it. Do not come back again, or I may trouble you. Be warned in time; for, just as sure as I hunted down your miserable husband—"

Millie heard no more. With a wrench she had the door opened and closed, and was speeding along the softly carpeted passages for the front door. In the lobby the servant was waiting to let her out; and had Millie been less horror-stricken and agitated, she would have seen in the girl's face both sympathy and pity. The moment the door was opened, a sudden blast of wind and sleet drove Millie and her child back into the lobby, and, to give her a moment's breath, the servant reclosed the door.

"Hadn't you better take an umbrella?" gently inquired the servant; "it's a wild night, and baby is not very well covered."

"No, no; I dare not," hurriedly answered Millie; but at the same moment her eye fell on the long cloak of blue cloth that had once been her own. "Stay," she added, taking it down and carefully wrapping it about her child; "I will take this. My father cannot object to me taking my own cloak to shield my wee baby from the storm. Thank you—oh, thank you for your kindness; I shall never forget it!" and then, with an impulsive grasp at the girl's hand, she once more faced the blast, dashed out and vanished in the storm.

Not above an hour after these events had taken place, a carriage drove up to the Central Police Office, in High Street, where I was seated busy over the books, and a gentleman got out, and was soon shown into my presence. A glance at his card showed me that he was a man of importance, and a director in several companies, but as I had never before seen him, I merely bowed, and awaited his commands.

"I have come to report an impudent robbery over at my house," he began with the utmost steadiness and coolness. "About an hour ago, a lobby-stripper—a young woman, bearing a child in her arms—obtained admittance to the lobby of my

house, and carried off a valuable lady's cloak, of fine blue cloth, and trimmed round the cape with fur. She was observed committing the theft by one of my servants, who, like a fool, did not raise any alarm till she was gone. She came to extort money from me, but finding the attempt a failure, she made up for it by stealing the cloak. I have here the receipted account, which will give you an idea of the stolen article far better than any description of mine. You will observe that the account was discharged by me some eighteen months ago, so that there can be no question as to the cloak being my property."

"Certainly not—the cloak is yours, without doubt," I said, utterly unsuspecting of the hidden links yet to be brought forward. "Have you any information or clue to give us concerning the thief?"

"I have. Her name, I believe, is Kirkland, and she resides somewhere in Thistle Street. Of course, you will try to get the cloak as well as the thief; but at anyrate get the thief, for such an audacious theft deserves the full punishment the law allows."

"True, Mr Fullerton, perfectly true," I answered; "and these lobby-stripping cases are becoming much too frequent. We will probably have the cloak in at least a few hours, for of course the thief would hasten to pawn it before it could be reported here."

"Not unlikely," said my visitor, with a gleam in his eye which I did not understand till next day. "Yes, she seemed poor and miserable enough even for *that*;" and he rubbed his hands like a man gloating over the poverty of his fellows, a gesture which rather jarred upon my feelings.

"You can give us no other information regarding the thief?"

"None. She said her husband was just dead. She might have been speaking the truth—I hope she was. But track her out, and you shall have all the assistance in my power to ensure a conviction," and after a few more words he took leave.

Next morning one of our men, taking a written notice to a pawnbroker's in Rose Street, was at once shown an entry in the book, with the ink scarcely dry, of the very cloak described in the notice.

The woman who had pawned the article was described as young, and carrying a child in her arms; and what was rather singular, she had given her name as "Mrs Millie Kirkland, No. — Thistle Street."

Could there ever have been a clearer or an easier case? I fairly rubbed my hands when the news was brought over, and at once went over to Thistle Street, feeling almost certain that the address was a real one, and only wondering at the thief being so foolhardy as to tender it. I found the stair easily enough, but, on ascending to the second storey, was rather surprised to come on a door, bearing on a brass-plate the name "Hugh Kirkland." I hesitated before ringing, and for the first time asked myself whether the informant might not have deceived me in some particulars; for thieves do not often occupy respectable half-flats, and have a conscientious objection to exhibiting their names boldly on any door whatever. I rang at last, and the door was opened by a young woman whose eyes were red with weeping, and whom I had no difficulty in identifying as the thief described by Mr Fullerton. She appeared to shrink from observation, and only half opened the door, which circumstances I was foolish enough to set down as signs of guilt.

"Mrs Kirkland, I believe? I have called about a rather disagreeable affair," I hesitatingly began, seeing her open her eyes wide in astonishment. "It is in connection with a cloak which you—" I did not finish the sentence, but the crimson flush which instantly mounted her cheeks told me that I was perfectly understood. Before the word "pawned" could rise to my lips, she had hastily, and a little fearfully, I thought, interrupted me by saying—

"I understand. Will you be good enough to step in for a moment?"

I followed her into a room nearly destitute of furniture, glanced at the sheeted form lying on the bed, and then turned to the lady once more, heartily wishing myself out of the job.

"Have you any objections to say where you got the cloak?" I gravely asked.

"No—that is—it is my own," was her simple reply, given with some amazement, but no visible alarm.

"Where did you buy it? and when?"

"I got it made for me nearly two and a half years ago. But is there anything wrong, that you ask?"

"There is; you are charged with stealing the cloak from the lobby of a gentleman's house."

A sharp sudden cry escaped her now, and she dropped faintly into a seat by the fire-place. She looked so clammy and white that, fearing she would drop the child, I stooped to sup-

port it ; but then rousing herself, she drew it closer, and shrinking from me huskily got out--

"My father—I suppose he has done this?"

"No," I said, with a sudden fear at my heart. "The informant—the gentleman—is Mr Fullerton."

"I knew it!" she cried, with a terrible tearless grief that made me shudder ; "he said he would hunt me down too, after killing my husband. Can it be possible that the law allows such things? I sometimes think that I am mad, or in a dream. I have shunned the world for two years—buried myself from all my friends and acquaintances—but now he means to drag me forth, and have me hooted at as a thief in a Police Court. O God ! would that I had died with my husband !"

I was stricken dumb, and cursed myself for being so easily duped the night before by the informant. I was roused by the poor girl rising and, with an unnatural calmness, tying on a shabby bonnet, and then hushing the cries of her child as she wrapped it and herself in the spare folds of a shawl.

"I am ready—let us go," she said, with all the dignity and grace of a queen. "Perhaps you will leave me a moment with—with—him," and she pointed to the straight sheeted form ; "I shall, perhaps, never see him again."

I bowed low, and shrank quickly out of the room into the empty, hollow-sounding passage ; and there, after a few moments, I was joined by my prisoner. Just as she showed herself at my side, a gentle knock at the outer door drew me forward to open it, when an old washerwoman, with her arms steaming from the tub, appeared, and was about to smilingly enter, when, with a sudden revulsion, my prisoner rushed forward and clung to her, crying—

"O Jenny, they're taking me away as a thief!" and then she so shook with convulsive sobs that the old woman had to support her in both her arms, while she furiously and indignantly turned to me to learn the reason of the strange proceeding.

"Jist you daur to lay a finger on her, an' I'll claw your een oot!" cried the old washerwoman. "She's nae mair a thief than I am, and ye nicht hae some respect for a puir lassie that's just lost her husband."

"I know now that in strict justice she is no thief," I gravely answered ; "but that is not a question for me to decide ; and I daresay she will have good grounds, when the case is over, for

raising an action for illegal arrest and imprisonment. But my work is simply to arrest her, and convey her to the Police Office; and I would give five pounds this minute that some one else had been chosen for the task."

I spoke with feeling, and the words appeared to silence the old woman far more effectually than threats. Turning to my prisoner, she hastily kissed her and the child, and then said—

"Keep up yer heart—it'll be a' richt in an hour or twa—the very detective here says ye're innocent. But surely ye'll hae some friend or acquaintance that'll stand up for ye in yer trouble!"

"I had friends, but I have shunned them all," sobbed the poor girl. "I dare not send for them now."

"Hout, woman, dinna be a fule; just gie me the name and address, and I'll rin every bit o' the road to get them."

"Miss Rosa Buchannan, No. — Atholl Crescent; she was once my companion and friend—" began Millie.

"Miss Buchannan! I wash for that hoose," delightedly exclaimed the old washerwoman. "I ken Miss Rosa fine, and her mother's the kindest leddy in a' Edinburgh. I'm off! I'll run like a hare! Miss Rosa will hae ye oot in twa meenits."

The old woman vanished, bareheaded as she was, and then I got a cab and drove to the Office, where with much reluctance we locked up the prisoner. This disagreeable business was not long over when a cab drove up furiously to the entrance, from which an elderly lady and a young one descended in great haste, and found their way to the room in which I was seated. The younger lady was flushed with excitement, and her cheeks yet wet with tears, and no sooner did I answer to my name than she haughtily tossed down a card on the desk, crying—

"There! that is my name, and this is my mamma, and we have come to see my darling lost Millie, and examine into this cruel, this monstrous charge of theft which has been trumped up against her!"

"Poor, poor, dear girl, what she must have suffered!" interposed the elder lady, wiping her eyes with her handkerchief. "And to be taken away as a thief, and put into a cold cell—oh, if I should spend all I possess, I will punish you for it!"

"Yes, and we mean to take her away with us, the poor stricken thing, and her dear wee baby. Oh, Mr M'Govan, what a monster in human shape you must be, to take away such poor innocent creatures, knowing them to be really innocent!"

"I am not exactly a monster, though I feel like one in having been mixed up in this affair," I replied, with some emotion. "No one can feel more warmly for the poor girl than myself, but I must remind you that the case is not in my hands, but those of the law; and even were the prosecutor to withdraw his charge—which, I regret to say, he firmly refuses to do—the case would at least require to be called in the open Court to-morrow morning in the usual way. This will convince you that your wish to carry the poor girl away with you cannot be acceded to, but at the same time I may assure you that you are quite wrong in supposing her to be shut up in a cold cell like an ordinary criminal. We will take care that she is supplied with every comfort till to-morrow, when I trust our care of her will come to an end."

"Very good. I shall engage the best lawyer who can be had for money, and if he does not succeed in disgracing this unnatural father in open Court before all the world, no one can," warmly returned the young lady. "Can we see *the prisoner*?" she added, with just the faintest emphasis upon the last words.

"Oh yes; be kind enough to follow me;" and I at once laid down my pen and led the way to the room in which Millie had been confined.

The moment I unlocked the door, there was a rush past me of the two visitors—a startled cry from within—and then the young lady had Millie hugged tight in her arms, with a glad cry and a wild burst of sobs that thrilled me through. I softly closed the door from without and left them alone for half-an-hour; but when I returned I found them all very red about the eyes with crying, and had some difficulty in convincing them that they had been more than five minutes together. When they at last left the room our prisoner no longer drooped like a withered lily; and when Miss Buchannan assured her that she would see to her husband's funeral and take her home with her the moment she was free, I thought the wreathing arms were never to be unlocked.

Next day the third case on the morning's list at the Police Court was this charge of lobby-stripping. One of the best lawyers in Edinburgh appeared for the prisoner, and after instructing his client to plead not guilty, he stated the case exactly as I have put it down, but with a good deal more eloquence and power. The witnesses against the prisoner were four—her father, the servant girl, the man who discovered the cloak at the pawn-shop, and myself. The father distinctly

swore that the cloak belonged to him, had been paid for by him, and never given away upon any pretence whatever. This witness having sat down amid suppressed hissing, the servant was called, and deposed to the taking of the cloak, but added that she thought "No ill of it, as she then knew that the prisoner was the master's own daughter, and there was a bitter storm outside." After some ingenious cross-examination of this witness by the skilful counsel for the prisoner, and after the evidence of the police had been gone into, the magistrate, after commenting severely on the conduct of the father in bringing such a case into Court, gravely regretted that he still did not see how he could do otherwise than find the charge proven. But even while recording the conviction against her, a nice question remained, and one which he hoped would yet be tried in another Court: that was—Could the young lady at the bar be said to be stealing when she had no thought of theft, but merely believed that she was wrapping about her child her own cloak? Could she be said to rob when she took only what she had two years before worn unquestioned in the very house she was charged with stripping? It was a nice question of ownership which the Court would not take upon itself to decide. While delivering this judgment, however, the Court could not but take into consideration the youth of the prisoner, the utter absence of any intention to steal, and the striking fact that she was not only a lady, neither vicious nor criminal, but the only daughter of the prosecutor. The sentence would be, that the prisoner, upon promising not to commit a similar offence again, should simply be dismissed from the bar.

A curse from Fullerton greeted the decision, but it was instantly drowned in a marked rumble of applause from the audience. Fullerton seized his hat and slunk out of Court, but, strangely enough, every one in the audience seemed at the same moment to have suddenly become possessed of a desire to get out to the open air. They pressed out along with him, they scowled at him, they jostled and hooted him, and just as he was descending the steps to a carriage in waiting, some one from behind suddenly drove his hat over his eyes. The rest was the work of a moment. A dozen hands grasped at his coat, which instantly was torn in ribbons off his back; kicks, rapid and vigorous, showered in a continual battery upon every available part of his body; and before he had crossed that narrow strip of pavement, he was

rendered almost unrecognisable, and that, too, with the law at his very elbow.

Scarcely had his carriage vanished, followed by a chorus of groans and hoots, when Miss Buchannan appeared, conducting the accused and her child, and then a wild cheer rang through the air that might have been heard down at Leith Wynd. A dozen hands flew to open the carriage door, and a score of nondescript hats and caps were waved as long as an inch of the carriage remained in sight.

Fullerton was stricken down with apoplexy scarcely six months after the trial, when it was found that, harsh and unforgiving to the end, he had left nearly all his wealth to various charities—perhaps to patch a way to heaven.

Millie and Rosa I sometimes see yet—stately, dignified ladies, who never pass me without bowing. They seem very happy, and are sometimes accompanied by a young advocate, of whom great things are expected, but who was only a baby when I arrested his mother as a lobby-stripper

THE VEILED PORTRAIT.

I USED to wonder what would be the end of the fierce war between M'Indoe and the thieves; for a war it very speedily became, in which, if M'Indoe was not the sufferer, he owed his safety entirely to his intimate knowledge of all their crimes and haunts. They could not hunt *him* down, for he lived by unremitting hard labour; and still less could they do him bodily injury, for he glided about more like a shadow than even their own dreaded leader, The Ruffian. The truth is, they feared M'Indoe, and cowered in their holes, as he stalked gloomily through their haunts, as if he had carried a whole cohort of invisible detectives at his back. Perhaps they read the expression of his seamed and sunken features aright; for if ever quenchless vengeance was written on a face, it was in these rigid lines. On the whole, I was inclined to look upon them as wolves—tearing and fighting each other, and *all* doomed to perish in the struggle.

As for M'Indoe, I got to believe that every merciful feeling—every ray of sunshine—was completely shut out of his heart; but in this I was mistaken, as the following interesting case, and another which shall follow, will show. In relating the simple incidents, I will also give another instance of the boundless devotion and quenchless love of a mother*:

In a little bright room at the top of one of those long stairs in Milne Square, two persons sat conversing pleasantly as equals, though their stations in life were very different. The first was the tenant of the room, Mrs Lyons, who, through almost every phase of happiness and good fortune, calamity and reverses, had at last landed there in the poverty and retirement of that garret; and the second was Walter Hutton, medical student and amateur artist, who had been sent there by the Public Dispensary to attend the old lady in her sickness. Hutton was a gentleman by birth and education, studying for a profession merely for form's sake, and gliding along carelessly

* See *Brought to Bay*, p. 261.

and easily, as became a man of wealth ; but the suspicion had just dawned upon him that the poor woman he attended was not what she seemed, but in some respects even his superior. Mrs Lyons sat propped in a chair by the fire facing the light, giving the "laddie," as she persisted in calling her visitor, such solid and sterling advice, and talking to him in such a kind, motherly strain, that at last his wayward sympathies were touched.

"Excuse me, ma'am," he said, brightening into a frank smile, and instinctively bowing before his poor patient, "but I think I have been mistaken in you. It seems to me that you have not always been in such a position. Believe me, I have no wish to pry into your affairs ; but you talk so kindly and warmly, that I'm sure you must have had a wayward son of your own at one time?"

The words came out in a thoughtless, impetuous burst ; but the speaker was astonished at their swift effect on the grave, still face before him. Mrs Lyons started violently, looked him keenly in the face to make sure that the words had no special meaning, and then pressed her hand on her breast with a weary sigh, and remained silent. It did not escape the quick eye of the student, however, that her tearful gaze was for a moment turned to a painting, veiled with crape and hung above the fireplace, the massive gilt frame of which contrasted strangely with the poverty of the other furnishings ; and as this was a subject that had often dwelt in his mind and excited his curiosity, he determined to gently lead the conversation in that direction. But before any suitable form of words could rise to his hushed lips, Mrs Lyons had found voice to say—

"Oh, laddie ! dinna speak of that. I once had a son, it is true, beautiful and guileless as the angels in heaven ; but because a' my heart was set on him, he was swept for ever from my sight ;" and the poor mother shook as she covered her furrowed face with her hands.

"He is dead, then?" returned the student in a subdued tone.

"Ay, dead to me—dead to a' the world—lost to God and man—a hounded thief !" cried the old woman, looking up with a flash in her eye. "They tell me so, and I maun believe it. In my happy days, I lived in the town of Paisley—admired, envied, and respected, with no care but the upbringing of my fatherless boy. They tell me that from a boy he became a man, robbing me and others on every hand, and at last was sent to

herd with the off-scourings of the earth in a prison ; but that woeful time seems now but a fevered dream. I love to think of him as dead—as taken from me when guileless and innocent as he stands in that portrait ;” and with a shaking hand she indicated the veiled picture.

“Your story interests me much,” said the student respectfully. “Might I look upon the portrait for a moment? You know I paint a great deal myself ; indeed, I am an enthusiast in the art, and have scarcely yet decided whether I may not follow it as a profession.”

Her answer came slowly, and with manifest reluctance.

“I care not to look upon it often myself,” she said ; “but as you have shown me much kindness, and it may teach you how the most innocent may through time become corrupted, I will not say you nay.”

Walter Hutton, with an eager hand, drew aside the veil of crape, and then started back with an exclamation of wonder and delight, which merged into a breathless and ecstatic silence as he ran his eye over the beautiful picture that stood revealed. It was the picture of a young boy, whose fair cheeks were browned with the sun and flushed with happiness and exercise, with a flood of golden hair floating forward over his shoulders, as he half-slyly and half-roguishly peeped out from behind a cherry tree, playfully holding up a bunch of the red fruit in his hand. On the frame beneath was legibly painted the words, “Cherry ripe ! James Lyons, aged 7.”

For some moments there was a deep silence in the room, the student being rapt in admiration, and the poor mother in memories of the past ; but at last, after viewing the picture in every light, the young man’s words came in an impulsive burst—

“I have never seen anything so exquisite ; it is beautiful beyond all praise !” he cried, turning to the delighted owner. “Do you not know, ma’am, that this painting is worth money—a considerable sum—perhaps one or two hundred pounds?”

A quiet smile lit up the face of his patient.

“I have been told so often in happier days, when my wee jim was young and innocent,” she softly replied. “But in all my struggles, and they have not been few, I never even dreamed of parting with it, not only for my boy’s sake, but that of the hand that painted it. It was my husband’s last work. It was a labour of love, and could never be valued in money. A whole fortune laid at my feet would not buy it.”

The student's faint hopes were instantly crushed, and he turned and once more gazed at the picture with a tinge of covetous envy creeping into his heart.

"I did not mean to buy it," he said at last; "though, if you had been so inclined, I might have seen my way even to that. But would you not allow me to copy it—to incorporate it in a picture I am at present hard at work upon?"

"And then it would be exhibited—exposed to the vulgar gaze of hundreds?" calmly inquired Mrs Lyons.

"It would be exhibited, doubtless," awkwardly returned the student-artist, "but it would be in a different form; and though it is possible that some who have known you in former times might see and recognise it, their comments could never injure you. Besides, I would be willing to pay any sum that you might think fit to ask for the favour, and would certainly guard it, while in my possession, with even more sacred care than you can possibly exhibit."

These last words almost died on his lips as he uttered them, for the quiet refusal was written on his patient's face even before she spoke.

"I cannot oblige you," was her firm reply; "I could not trust the portrait a moment from my sight."

"But think," he persisted. "The money—"

"Has no influence with me," she quietly rejoined. "I had it once—it went, wrenching from me at the same moment my darling son; and as it has only cursed me in the past, I care not though I never again feel its influence."

What answer could there be to such a speech? The young student—the gentleman who had never from his infancy had his slightest wish crossed—might well turn away with a flush of disappointment on his cheeks, and bite his lip in silence. But now every fresh objection only made him more eager to attain his object, and after a pause he pleadingly said—

"Then, Mrs Lyons, you might allow me to take a sketch of it here, in your presence?"

"Not for such a purpose. Laddie, I'm sorry that I ever yielded so far as to let you see it at all," firmly returned his patient, rising from her seat with difficulty, and again drawing the veil over the picture. "Think of it as if you knew nothing of what lies behind this veil. You have much to learn yet in repressing your fancies before you can rise to be a good and noble man."

"I don't know," he replied, for the moment flashing up into

a semblance of eloquence. "It is the sole ambition of my life to be an artist. I love it with all my heart and soul, but have been forced into the drudgery of this medical profession till I can show the world and my friends some conception so powerful and beautiful that every objection should at once be hushed. Such a picture I am now at work upon, and with a subject and effects such as this portrait contains worked into it, my triumph would be complete. You who have been the wife of an artist can understand my feelings. I would sacrifice anything to this one ambition. Now, Mrs Lyons, you know how much depends on your granting this simple request—let me hear my sentence?"

The old woman was moved—visibly moved; for in spite of his carelessness and easy selfishness, there was a frankness and openness in his manner and talk especially winning to one living in poverty and obscurity.

But her decision remained firm and unaltered: she would not allow him to remove the picture, to copy it, sketch it, or use it in any way. He plied her in every possible manner—warmly, reproachfully, and temptingly—but all in vain, and thus they parted for the day.

"I'll get it yet," he muttered to himself, as he descended the stair—"I'll get it yet, though I should have to employ some one to steal it!"

Next day he returned to the subject, but found Mrs Lyons cold, silent, and distant. All his offers were either answered with a smile or met by a grave silence and shake of the head more effectual and convincing than a torrent of words. Another day elapsed, and then he was firmly but politely requested not to renew his visit, his patient declaring that she had perfectly recovered, and would require no further medical attendance. His quick intelligence penetrated the shallow artifice to get rid of his importunities; but he was still gentleman enough to obey, with however bad a grace, and I daresay but for the merest accident would soon have forgotten all about the veiled portrait and its poor owner.

It happened that a few nights after he was over in a billiard room in Rose Street, having a quiet game with a friend, when in a pause his opponent chanced to say—

"By-the-bye, I suppose you don't know that Bob, the marker here, is an accomplished thief?" There, don't start—he's a clever thief, but quite a harmless one. He is not now in the profession, and as honest a man as breathes; but what I mean is

that, for the fun of the thing, or a glass of beer, he will steal anything you like from any gentleman here to show his skill—on condition, of course, that the article be afterwards returned to its owner."

Nothing more was said on the subject at the time; but though Hutton appeared to laugh heartily at the idea, the words had planted a strange thought in his mind, and before leaving he drew the marker aside, and began cautiously sounding him on the subject nearest and dearest to his own heart.

"I suppose," he said at last, "that having been a thief yourself, you will be well acquainted with the members of the fraternity—by sight, I mean, even here in Edinburgh?"

"Well acquainted?—rather!" was the knowing rejoinder, given with an expressive wink. "I know every blessed prig in Edinburgh."

"I will be candid with you," cautiously continued the student. "I have not asked without a reason. Do you think, now, that you could recommend me any one that would do a job of the kind for me?"

"What! is it possible? Do *you* want to commit a robbery!" exclaimed the marker, starting back in surprise.

"No, not exactly," was the smiling rejoinder; "but I want something done which only a thief can do, and which would certainly look like a robbery to most people. I will explain. A friend of mine has in her possession a picture which I am anxious to copy. She refuses to lend it, and all I want is to borrow it *by force* for a week or a fortnight, when it would be faithfully returned."

"Hem!—seems all fair and above board," ponderingly returned the marker. "You're sure, though, that you don't mean to do a slope with the picture after all? Because, if you do, you've come to the wrong man. I would not commit a real robbery myself for any consideration, or help another to do it."

"You need have no fear on that account," haughtily returned the student. "I would not dream of retaining in my possession a thing so religiously prized by its owner. I wish to copy it—nothing more. Do you know any one who would do the job for a fair sum, faithfully and honestly?"

"Well, as to that, there's dozens would be glad of the chance," replied the marker; "but I don't think you could get a better hand than Coreing Jim, the Paisley Ware."

"And who may he be, if I may inquire?"

"Oh, he is one of the The Ruffian's gang—a clever enough young cove in his way, but a little rash and reckless with his hands. However, if you were to strictly warn him against all violence, I daresay it would come off all right—especially as you say there would be little trouble about the job."

"No trouble at all," eagerly rejoined the student. "She is an old woman, living in a poor locality, at the very top of the stair, with not another near her. The door is so flimsy and rickety that I myself could burst it in with one hand;" and then he hurriedly detailed the facts already known to the reader.

"Well, I don't mind obliging you. I'll take you to where you are likely to see the Paisley Wire," said the marker; "but mind, if anything happens, or any evil befalls the old woman, I'll peach as sure as guns; so weigh well the risk before you go a step further."

"Risk? There is no risk," blindly reasoned the student, in an impatient burst. "Besides, I'm determined to have a loan of the picture, even were it for only twenty-four hours. I believe that for masterly execution and delicate colouring there is not another such picture in Scotland."

This conversation had been carried on in whispers in the tap-room, in which there was at the time only one other person, a seedy-looking man in a faded black suit, who appeared to be fast asleep, with his head resting on a bundle of newspapers on the table near the fire. The moment the arrangement had been concluded, the student and marker left the room and house together; and then the man by the fire cautiously raised his head and disclosed the whisky-tacketed face and cunning eyes of Simon Penbank. Finding himself quite alone, he shook himself into thorough wakefulness, and gleefully rubbed his hands.

"Another for M'Indoe, and two quid for me!" he muttered with a chuckle. "Coreing Jim is a smart man, but he has now got to the end of his tether. Alas, alas! such is life—it is the fate of all to be nabbed in the end;" and with this pathetic reflection he left the place, and took his way over to M'Indoe's home in the Horse Wynd.

Meanwhile the student and the marker were making their way through some dens in Leith Street Terrace, then down to Greenside, and finally to the head-quarters in the "Happy Land," in Leith Wynd, where they were at last successful in finding the man of whom they were in search.

Coreing Jim was quite a young man, and so polite and

proper-spoken that the student opened his eyes in surprise. There was no slang or brutal oaths; indeed, but for the unmistakable brand of crime written on his pallid features, Hutton could not have believed that he was not conversing with one holding as good a position in society as himself. The very way in which he placed the rickety chairs for his visitors, spoke of better days and circumstances; but it was not that which chiefly fascinated the impulsive young student. It was the man's face. It seemed wondrously familiar in every line to the artist; and yet, think as he might, he could not remember where he had seen it, or something like it, before.

The thief listened patiently to what was required of him—to steal or forcibly borrow a picture, leaving a written note in its place, and return the same at the end of a fortnight.

"I myself can point out the stair to you," said the student in conclusion. "And you cannot mistake the house, for it is at the very top, with no other door near it."

"And you say it is a woman who owns it?"

"An old woman, and generally bedridden."

"Could she not be induced to lend the picture, or sell it you for a consideration?" inquired the thief, demurring a little. "Be sure, if it belongs to a woman—especially a poor one—there will be trouble in securing it; and if she squealed or resisted, I don't know what I might do in my passion."

"I have come to you as a last resource," quietly returned the student. "She will not lend it, or allow me to use it in any way. But I will have no violence; and unless you think you can so far command yourself to do it quietly, without laying a finger on the poor lady, or even frightening her, I will not have it done; so ponder well before you decide."

"I'll do it," said the thief, after a pause. "How much shall it be?"

"Five pounds. Will that be enough?"

"It'll do. Give me your address and the note I am to leave in its place, and you shall have the picture in three hours."

This ended the conversation. The note was written there and then, under some difficulties, and placed in the hands of the intending burglar; and then the student and the marker took their leave and made for their different homes through the dark and deserted streets; while Coreing Jim rummaged about for a few tools and a dark lantern, which he cleaned and adjusted, and then disposed of in various parts of his

dress. Shortly after twelve o'clock, well buttoned up, and with his cap pulled down over his brow, he slipped up the High Street on the right-hand side, in the shade, and reached the stair in Milne Square unmolested, at the precise time indeed that M'Indoe and Penbank were lugging me in from a station at the south side, as fast as legs could carry me, with the promise of another capture in connection with The Ruffian's gang.

All was hushed and dark at the top of the stair in Milne Square, and Coreing Jim, who had removed his shoes before ascending the last flight of steps, was feeling gently the panels and fastenings of the door with a view to discovering the swiftest and least noisy mode of forcing an entrance, when, to his surprise, he found that, by some overlook on the part of the occupant, the door had been left simply on the latch. The thief could scarcely believe his good fortune, and listened breathlessly, with the door slightly ajar, for any signs of wakefulness within. A heavy slow breathing caught his ear and thrilled him with renewed hope, and a slight twinkle from the dying embers of the fire served to direct his keen glance to the veiled picture above.

"Good!" he muttered; "I'll slip in and out and she'll never be a bit the wiser till she wakes and misses it in the morning;" and in another moment he was within the room, across the floor like a dark shadow, and grasping the prize in his hands.

During this short interval, and at every step, he had listened with strange attention to the breathing of the sleeping woman; but now, while he fumbled in his pocket for the anonymous note to leave in place of the picture, a sudden flutter—a stoppage of the steady breathing and a waking sigh—caught his ear, and almost made his heart stand still. He stood there motionless as a statue, and not daring to breathe; but it was only for an instant.

The mischief was done. The eyes of the old woman were open, and staring with rousing intelligence at the dim figure against the twinkling light of the fire, and in another moment there was a great scream echoing through the room as she sprang up and threw herself upon the intruder.

"Curses on it, leave go!" he hissed, striving in vain to loosen the desperate grasp of her fingers from the picture—"leave go, I say, or it'll be worse for you."

"Never, though you should kill me on the spot," cried the poor mother, clinging to her one treasure with all her strength. "Help! help! thieves! murder! A-h-h!"

Her last exclamation was a groan, which died away in a faint sigh as she dropped like a stone unheeded on the floor. One crash of the cruel neddy had stilled her cries and loosened her grasp, and the picture dropped heavily on the floor, with the crape veil torn away in shreds, and the beautiful gilt frame being rapidly stained and dabbled with her blood.

"She would have it," whispered Coreing Jim, in hushed and awful tones, as he listened breathlessly for any sounds of alarm from below. "Yet I'm sorry I did it, though I don't know why. Now for the picture, and then I'm off."

He stooped to grope for the picture, and in doing so turned back the slide of the dark lantern he carried; and the crape having been torn off in the struggle, the strong glare of light fell full on the beautiful picture.

But why did he start and shiver and gaze at the beautiful and innocent young features with his eyes starting from their sockets, with every nerve and muscle in his frame petrified into rigidity, and with his heart suddenly ceasing to beat within him? Why did he utter a piercing groan, as if his very heart had been torn from his breast, and sink on his knees and try to raise the poor woman in his arms, heedless of the warning tramp of footsteps below?

"My mother!" he hoarsely quivered forth. "O, God! I have killed my own mother!" and then in a paroxysm of grief, he tried to kiss the oozing blood from the pale brow of the stricken woman, wildly chafing her hands in his own, and striving by every endearing term to call her back to sensibility; and for a moment it appeared as if he were likely to succeed. Mrs Lyons opened her eyes with a faint moan, and gazed wildly in his face; but there came no recognition.

"Mother! mother!" he almost screamed. "It is Jimmy—your own wee Jim."

"My wee Jim?" she faintly and dreamily echoed. "No, no, you are not he; for he is dead—lost to God and man!" and then with a faint sigh she relapsed into insensibility; and at the same moment the door was burst open, giving entrance to Hugh M'Indoe, Penbank, and myself. I turned up the light, while the other two threw themselves on Coreing Jim, and tried to wrench him away from the wounded woman. But the thief, instead of turning and fighting like a tiger, as we had anticipated, only continued to bend over the senseless figure, wringing his hands and moaning out—

"I have killed her! I have killed her! Take me up—take

me away, and hang me before all the world ! I have killed her !”

“Aha !” cried Simon Penbank, perking forward and gloatingly rubbing his hands, after exhibiting two gold coins in his palm—“You said you would do me, Mister Jim ; but I think the knife has cut the wrong way. I’ve done you, and there’s the price, in good solid gold.”

But the taunt fell on dulled senses, heedless or incapable of retort ; for the thief still wrung his hands and moaned—

“Take me away—I’ve killed her ! Oh, mother, and is this the end of it all ?”

M’Indoe gazed at him with wildly opened eyes, but offered no remark, except to demur and hurl aside Penbank when he again advanced to taunt our prisoner ; and then I slipped on a pair of handcuffs and led Coreing Jim away up to the Office, when a medical assistant was at once despatched to attend to the injured woman.

Next morning, to the surprise of all, Mrs Lyons appeared, with her head all bound up, and supported between two women, and demanded in such a piteous strain to see the prisoner, stating as a reason that she was sure some great mistake had been committed, that her request was at last complied with ; but what took place in the cell, of course was known to no one. After the interview she appeared calmer, though it was evident that she had been weeping, and was accommodated with an easy seat by the fire in one of the side rooms, where she remained propped up till the hour appointed for the examination of Jim Lyons drew near. M’Indoe arrived about half-past ten, and was shown into the same room ; and the moment he was made known to her, she addressed him long and earnestly in an eager whisper, clasping one of his hands in her own the while, and wetting it with her tears. As the imploring rush of words fell on the ears of the stern unflinching man, he was observed to start and question her, then to listen breathlessly, and then, when at last she said, “Remember I am his mother, and he is my only boy ; have mercy on him, as you expect mercy hereafter,” his hard features relaxed, and, stooping down, he reverently kissed her hand.

When the case was called, the result appeared ; and it was enough to take away the breath of one even more experienced than myself. Mrs Lyons was the first to be examined, and, after the usual oath had been administered, she was asked to look at the prisoner.

"Do you recognise that man?" asked the superintendent.

"I do; he is my son."

There was a stir and a start all over the Court as she uttered these words.

"Do you charge him with breaking into your house and committing this shocking assault upon your person?"

"I do not. Jimmy would never raise his hand against me, his own mother."

"Do you mean to tell us that he did not commit this assault?" sharply demanded the superintendent. "How did you get hurt?"

"I don't know. I have not seen him for years, and I fainted away in his arms, and when I woke I found my forehead bleeding, and a doctor binding it up."

Here the prisoner groaned aloud, and buried his face in his hands.

"Is it not true that you were once in better circumstances, and that the prisoner squandered your whole substance and left you to beggary?" inquired the superintendent, in a softened tone.

"It was all his own," was the tearful answer. "Poor Jim! he was led away by bad companions. O Sir! if you only knew all, you would not ask me to speak against him;" and then the poor, forgiving mother covered her face with her shaking hands and sobbed aloud.

The superintendent whispered for a moment with me, and then said—

"It is useless to trouble further with this witness. Bring forward Hugh M'Indoe."

The reformed thief stepped forward, while Mrs Lyons bent forward breathlessly to listen to his evidence.

"Do you know this man?"

"I do; he is known as Coreing Jim, the Paisley Wire."

"Have you reason to believe that he last night attempted to commit a burglary at a house in Milne Square?"

"I thought so last night, but it seems I have been mistaken, and that he was only on a visit to his mother."

More cross-examination followed, but nothing could induce the hunter of thieves to reveal more. I was next examined, but of course I could only tell the truth—that I had been sought out by M'Indoe to trap another of the "Happy Land" gang, without having time to glean particulars; and that we arrived only to find the prisoner moaning over his mother's

senseless form, and stating that he had killed her. The result was that the case was given up owing to the defective evidence, and the prisoner was discharged with a caution. Yes, a caution, and one that was effectual for life. Coreing Jim, I rejoice to say, from that moment ceased to exist; but in a town a good many miles west, James Lyons sprang into life, an energetic foreman in a spinning-factory, a credit to the town, and the sole comfort and joy of his aged mother.

M'SWEENY AND THE LOST POODLE.

M'SWEENY and I were seated by the fire in the Office one cold spring morning arranging the division of labour, in connection with a case just placed in our hands, when the following affair dropped in to separate us for the day. I have no doubt that, if the telling of the story had fallen to my chum, he would have given quite a different tinge to the incidents—more particularly to the grand result of the whole of his searching and tracing, one of M'Sweeny's fixed ideas being that he never failed with a single case that was placed in his hands.

We were seated, as I said, arranging our business, when, with a grand rustle, a very tall and gaunt lady, dressed in the most outrageous and expensive manner, was shown in and accommodated with a seat. At first she was too agitated to speak, and, indeed, looked so like she was going to faint, that M'Sweeny had to dance about her like a lacquey, handing her water, opening her scent-bottle, and even pulling up the window and vigorously fanning her with a big ledger, snatched hastily from the desk; but, after five or ten minutes foolery, she so far recovered as to be able to hand me a card bearing the inscription, "Miss Victoria Guggle, Canis Lodge, by Dean," at the same time gasping out—

"Poor Frederick William! Lost, lost!"

"Do you allude to the young Prince, or to a child of that name?" I sharply inquired, being rather pressed for time, and not disposed for nonsense.

"Neither, neither!" she impatiently answered, mopping her eyes daintily with a scented cambric. "But he was a prince among dogs, which is nearly the same. My poor poodle!—he has been stolen!"

I slammed to the book rather angrily and stood up.

"Oh, only a dog lost! Get a few hundred bills printed—they won't cost you above five shillings—and you're pretty sure to hear of it, or some dog like it," I callously remarked, bowing, to intimate that she was wasting our time, and had better go.

But no ; she only settled herself more comfortably back in the chair, and cried in horrified indignation—

“Like it? another dog like it?—there isn’t a dog like it in the whole world !”

“Poh ! nonsense ! we kill them in dozens up here in the warm weather, as like as peas in a plate,” I coolly continued ; then seeing that M’Sweeny’s ledger was again in requisition, as the lady was showing symptoms of a coming swoon, I quickly changed the subject by adding, “Have you any idea who has been the thief?”

“I have !” she cried, starting out of her faintness with the most surprising ease, and looking all animation as she spoke ; “a dreadful looking man, with cropped hair, a bullet head, no neck, and a lame leg. He followed me on several occasions when I was giving Frederick William an airing. Oh, I shudder to think of what the poor dear fellow may have to suffer if he has fallen into the hands of that fiend.”

At the description M’Sweeny and I exchanged glances and a quick whisper, “It must be Snarley Piper, the dog fancier ;” but she was allowed to finish without interruption.

“Why did you think the man a fiend?” I quietly asked, beginning to be amused at her energy.

“Because Frederick William snapped at him two or three times, and it is only bad, cruel men to whom he has an aversion. Once he bit the man in the leg, which was only what he deserved ; but the poor darling suffered for it, for he was sick the whole day after. He could not eat his dinner. There must have been something bad about the man when a simple bite at his leg upset my poor poodle so.”

I stared, and then bent suddenly over the desk to hide the laugh, while M’Sweeny clapped his hand on his mouth, and turned to poke industriously at the fire.

“Poor dog,” I said, as soon as I could speak, and not daring to look up ; “how cruel of the man to allow himself to be bitten ! And I suppose the man was even unreasonable enough to consider himself the aggrieved person?”

“Yes, indeed he was,” emphatically returned Miss Guggle, in perfect seriousness. “He used dreadful language, which I could not repeat, and then shook a cane at Frederick William, whom I had snatched up in my arms, and said, ‘Blow me, but I’ll take that out of your skin yet ! I’ll cure yer of bitin’ for the remainder of your wicious life.’”

“Dreadful !” I exclaimed, choking with mirth.

"And in this country, too, wid all our police and prisons!" echoed M'Sweeny, still poking at the fire.

"But did the man not say anything to you?" I asked, addressing the lady.

"Oh, yes, he followed me, using the most awful threats, and gathering a crowd about me till I had to take a cab to get rid of him, after giving him half a sovereign instead of my address. I wish I had known that my poor dog was to be ill after it; and instead of giving money, I would have demanded his address, and then sued him for damages."

"Sure ye've got damages enough, if he's bin an' stole yer dog," demurely remarked M'Sweeny, with a twinkle in his eye.

"That is true—too true," gushingly returned the lady; "and I'm glad to see that you at least sympathise with me. Very foolishly I took him out last night without the leash attached to his collar. Once in the crowd, I fancied I caught sight of the dreadful man; but it may have been but fancy. At any rate, I had not gone far, when, looking round and expecting to see poor Frederick William at my heels, I was terror-stricken to find him gone—nowhere to be seen!"

"And you have not heard of him since?"

"No; I and my servants have searched the whole city between then and now, but we can find no trace of him."

"Then offer a reward at once. Men like Snarley Piper are hard to convict. They live by rewards, if you understand; in a word, they are dog-stealers; and if you do not see about it quickly, the dog, if he is worth the trouble, will probably be sent off to Glasgow, or some other distant city, to be sold."

"Oh! dreadful. I would pay anything rather than that should happen. But if you know this man, could you not go to him and make terms—"

"We are not allowed to make terms, as you call it," I abruptly observed. "The law, as a person in your position should know, is very stringent; there must be no compounding with crime. I will send Mr M'Sweeny here down to the man's last known abode, and he may find the dog, or he may not. But at the same time accept a quiet hint from me: offer a handsome reward at once; it can do no harm; and indeed is almost the only plan I can suggest to you which is likely to ensure the restoration of your pet."

"I have his portrait here," she said, eagerly opening her reticule, and producing a miniature very prettily painted on

ivory. "I will entrust it to your keeping, as it may assist you in your search."

M'Sweeny took the portrait; saw that it represented a mass of curly white hair, with two eyes stuck in the front; said a lot of soothing things about being certain to recognise her dog by the miniature, and as certain to recover it speedily; and then, with a sigh of satisfaction, I saw the old lady get up, adjust her curls and flounces, and "take her form from out my door."

As soon as she was gone, I set off alone about the business she had interrupted; while M'Sweeny, feeling pretty sure of his case, sauntered down to Snarley Piper's hovel in the Canon-gate, to begin his cautious inquiries after "poor Frederick William."

Snarley was a strange character—a little, repulsive-looking man, with one leg half a foot shorter than the other; and how he lived no one could tell, though no one within a stone's throw of his dark cellar could be ignorant of the fact that he kept and boarded a noisy and offensive-smelling assortment of dogs. Snarley's ideas of honesty were of rather a hazy description. According to his theory, a dog was never stolen. It might get lost, and then be found by a fancier like himself, who, out of pity and deep-seated affection towards dogs, might take it to his home and treat it to the best of everything; and then, if its owners turned up, why, he couldn't prevent them making him a present for his trouble. That was Snarley's version of one of his pursuits. We, of course, were prejudiced and malevolent, and took rather a harsher view of things.

M'Sweeny reached the door of the cellar, which was lighted but dimly from a grating on the pavement above, and, without troubling to knock, entered, and peered down the stone steps for the owner amid a tremendous clamour of barking that would have frightened any one less ignorant of dogs and their likings than M'Sweeny. Snarley was at home he could see, but too busily employed in clipping the white hair of a poodle on his knee to rise to receive his visitor. M'Sweeny gingerly descended through the gloom, and then became the centre of a ring of barking curs of every size and shape, which, with open mouths and gleaming teeth, seemed ready to swallow him alive. A few oaths and the free use of a whip among the dogs soon drove them back, and then Snarley, who had finished his clipping and put down the shorn animal, could hear a faint outline of M'Sweeny's query—

"Have ye got any poodles among yer dogs? There's one lost."

The words were significantly uttered, but they produced no more impression on Snarley's face than they would have done on the Wellington Statue.

"Only two," he said, kicking carelessly at the animals in question, one of them being the dog just sheared. "But they're not lost dogs; they're consigned by gentlemen to sell."

"I hope so," dryly rejoined M'Sweeny, keeping his eye on the poodle still unclipped, and mentally comparing it with the miniature he was fumbling for. "That one there wid the long hair seems to me very like the one I want. Look for yerself: there's the dog's portrait, painted nicer than many a human being's."

It was one of Snarley's peculiarities that he never appeared disturbed. Coolly taking the miniature in his hand, and going closer to the light, he compared it long and earnestly with the poodle indicated.

"No, it ain't like that dog at all," he firmly returned, handing back the miniature. "It's more like that un I've just trimmed."

"Bah!" cried M'Sweeny, with a knowing wink; "go and teach yer granny to—to milk ducks. D'ye think I haven't got eyes in me head? That other's not a bit like the pictur'."

"Yes he is," doggedly insisted Snarley. "Don't you sei up for a judge of dogs. Fact is, them two dogs is as like as peas; I just trimmed that un so as to know one from t'other. If I was to trim the other the same way, ye couldn't tell me which was which after they'd been mixed up."

"Couldn't I, though? Just try me," said M'Sweeny, who prided himself on his peculiar acuteness of eye.

The challenge thus thrown out was accepted at once. M'Sweeny retired to the far end of the cellar. Snarley turned his back to him, and began the clipping business, trimming the dog exactly as he had done the other, and in less than half-an-hour the two dogs were placed before him for inspection, so like each other that he stared and stared, scarcely able to believe his own eyes, far less to identify his own favourite.

"Now, will ye believe me?" cried Snarley, in triumph.

"Sure, they're as like as two floury potatoes," said M'Sweeny, in rather a humble tone; "but, begorra, I still think the wan that had the long hair is the wan I'm after; so just hand it over, and I'll take it out to the lady to see."

"Well, have your own way," was the indifferent reply; and Snarley stooped down to pick out the dogs, which had leaped in among the motley collection. "Let me see now. Oh, of course, you want the one I clipped last;" and he looked at the two poodles long and searchingly—"to be sure, the one I clipped last."

"Yes, come on now; which is it?"

"Ah! which is it, to be sure?" and Snarley scratched his head long and anxiously as he examined the two dogs. "Why, blow me, if I can tell."

"Come on now, ye thafe of the world," cried M'Sweeney, a little dismayed at this turn of things, but putting on his sternest tones. "Don't try to chate an officer and a detective; tell me which is the one I recognised."

"I can't—I wish I could;" and Snarley again scratched his head and anxiously examined the dogs. "I wish *you* could tell me which is the t'other one, cos I promised him to a dog-performin' man."

Much shaking of heads and turning over of the two poodles brought them not a whit nearer the truth, and at last M'Sweeney was forced to decide the matter in his own way.

"I'll take them both," he said at last, making a double leash of a bit twine he had brought with him. "If any of the two's the lost dog, the lady 'ill surely be able to spot him out."

"And if she does, I'm ready for her," doggedly replied Snarley, and thus they parted.

It happened that the day was a muddy one; and as the way out to Canis Lodge, a bit past the Dean, was not a short one, and M'Sweeney was not so fond of poodles as to carry them in his arms, when he reached the place the two objects he had tugged along through the mire at his heels were so bespattered with mud as to be all but unrecognisable as dogs. M'Sweeney was readily admitted into Miss Guggle's presence; but when she cast her eye upon the two things which he pulled forward—more like drowned rats than poodles—she uttered a scream, and started back as if he had introduced a plague to the house.

"Take them away!" she screamed, showing signs of a speedy swoon. "My dog, indeed! Neither of them is mine; not the least like dear Frederick William; ugly, starved brutes; out with them! Man, had you not the portrait to guide you? Go away; the servant will give you some refreshment. I am really much obliged to you; but bah! take them out of my sight."

"All right, ma'am," said M'Sweeney, who was himself con-

fused enough on the subject of identity, "only I thought I'd show ye them and let ye take your choice. If I hear of your dog, I'll send it out to you."

Rather humbled and crestfallen he retired, duly received a refection in the lobby, and again started for home.

But the adventures of the luckless poodles were not over for the day. Scarcely had M'Sweeny left the house a hundred yards behind him, when a gigantic quarryman, trudging off in the opposite direction, and carelessly smoking a pipe as he went, stopped full in front of him, eyeing the dogs keenly, removed the pipe from his teeth, and laying his hand on M'Sweeny's arm, said sternly—

"Stop! Where did ye get them dogs?"

Though M'Sweeny was not a little man, the other towered above him at least a head, and, I believe, rather awed my chum with his fierce manner.

"I got them from a man in Edinburgh."

"I thought so; you didn't buy 'em, I'll swear!"

"N—no."

"Humph! Well, one of 'em's mine, though they're so dirty I don't know which is him, and the other looks precious like one I sold to a lady not far from here. My belief is you've stole 'em. Will ye give 'em up quietly, or come along wi' me to my house?"

After thinking a moment, M'Sweeny decided that he would go along with the man, a decision that rather surprised his captor. They trudged westward along the dirty roads till they reached a rather lonely little cottage, a little off the main road, and there the quarryman produced a key, and admitted M'Sweeny and the draggled poodles to the untidy den. Glancing round, M'Sweeny guessed at the easy-going character of his captor by seeing two guns, a game-bag, some snares and nets, and a monster bell-mouth blunderbuss ostentatiously displayed on the walls.

"Look here," sternly continued the quarryman. "My name's Bob Marten, and I'm a quarryman, and this is my own house, and them dogs is mine; so what have ye to say agin givin' 'em up?"

"Nothing—nothing," coolly answered M'Sweeny; "they're so dirty that I'll be glad to get rid of them; only mind, they're not mine. They belong to an owld gintleman in Edinburgh, who is apt to get in an awful passion when any one steals his dogs, that's all. If you're willing to run the risk, so am I;" and M'Sweeny calmly seated himself on one of the chairs littering the hovel.

"Oh, the gentleman be hanged!" roughly responded Marten; "I'm not afraid of him, not though it was old Snarley, the dog-stealer, himself. The dogs ain't his, and that's enough."

"You've hit it. It's just Snarley," cried M'Sweeny, with great animation.

"Is it? Well, I might ha' guessed it," cried Marten, slapping his thigh at the revelation. "The old thief, to try to rob *me*! You can tell him I've got 'em, and mean to keep 'em. Who are you, now?"

"I am a detective. My name's M'Sweeny," said my chum grandly; and then he added, with affected modesty, "Maybe ye've heard the name mentioned before?"

"Can't say I have," indifferently returned Marten, with one breath damping all M'Sweeny's pride and elation. "But, detective or no detective, I mean to stick to the dogs till you can prove your right to them."

Secretly M'Sweeny, I believe, was not sorry to get rid of the troublesome charge, which rather detracted from his dignity as he marched along the streets and roads; but he could not let the other go without having at least one dig at him.

"You're a quarryman?" he said, glancing significantly at the guns and other poaching apparatus hanging round.

"Yes."

"And these are your tools, I suppose?" and M'Sweeny winked expressively at the guns.

"Yes, they're the tools that'll keep off old Snarley if he comes poking about looking for his dogs," determinedly replied the quarryman.

"I suppose you do a bit of poaching o' nights?"

"Maybe I do, and maybe I don't," darkly returned Marten. "At anyrate, I don't poach on Snarley's grounds, or on yours, so you've nothing to complain of."

"I think I'll be goin'," said M'Sweeny, "but ye'll have to stand the consequences. I'm goin' straight in to tell Snarley who's got his dogs."

"Do," said Marten; and then rising, he took down a packet of small shot, which he opened before M'Sweeny's eyes. "Look here, do you see that shot?"

"Begorra, I'm not blind."

"Well, tell him that that blunderbuss just holds a packet neat, and he'll get it all in him if he comes near this place trying to steal back the dogs."

M'Sweeny shrugged his shoulders, but promised to deliver

the message ; and then he left and got into Edinburgh, where, before going near the Office, he gave Snarley a call.

The dog-stealer looked rather blank when he saw him alone, but with his usual coolness grunted out—

“ Well, what have ye done wi’ the dogs ? ”

“ The lady didn’t recognise either of them,” sheepishly began M’Sweeny.

“ What lady ? ”

The question was put abruptly, and like a fool, M’Sweeny answered it ; giving the address too, which was exactly what Mr Snarley Piper wanted.

“ Miss Guggle, Canis Lodge, by Dean. She said they weren’t a bit like hers.”

“ Did she, indeed ? ” and Snarley chuckled and grinned at the news. “ Well, where’s the dogs ? ”

“ A man claimed them and detained them.”

A wrathful cloud chased away all Snarley’s grinning.

“ A man ? What man ? ”

“ Bob Marten, a quarryman. He said they were stolen.”

“ Bob Marten, the swindler ! and you let him keep them ? ” and then Snarley, who was evidently touched in his most sensitive spot, got in a frightful passion, stormed, raged, and swore, stamping up and down on his lame leg till M’Sweeny actually feared he would attack him. One strange fact, however, was notable. He never once denied that the dogs were stolen.

“ I’ll have ’em back before twelve o’clock to-night,” he said. “ I’ll go out and break into his place after ten, when he’ll either be in bed or out poaching. “ Steal a dog from Snarley ! the fool, what does he take me for ? ”

“ That would be housebreaking ; ye’d better not try it,” continued M’Sweeny ; “ besides, he says he’ll shoot ye if ye come near the place.”

“ What do I care ? Let him shoot ; ten to one he misses me. I go out to-night ; ” and then without ceremony Snarley shoved M’Sweeny out of the cellar and locked the door.

About two hours after these incidents, the following expressive and cunningly-concocted note was dropped into the letter-box at Canis Lodge by some person unknown, who rang the bell and walked off :—

“ Der Mum,—Mister Macsweeny, the grate detictive, has sett me on toe trak yore dog. Thare is hopp, mum, thare is hopp—expict toe see him soone. Yours truely,
Mister S. Piper.”

“ The kind Hom for dogs, Canongate.”

Meanwhile M'Sweeny, knowing the stubborn determination of Snarley when he took an idea into his head, took the precaution of sending out a message to Marten warning him of the dog-stealer's threat and burglarious intentions. This done, he waited patiently at the Office till I arrived, about eight o'clock, when he gave me the whole particulars of his day's work. I listened languidly—for I was dreadfully tired, having been on my feet the whole day—till he mentioned Snarley's avowed intention to break into the poacher's cottage. Then I brightened up and felt ever so much fresher—for Snarley had long been a pest to the city—and, when M'Sweeny had finished, I said decidedly—

"Come away; let us go out and watch the place. We can pick up Snarley as neatly as possible, and get rid of him for seven or ten years, which is more than we will ever manage while he sticks to mere dog-stealing."

In about an hour we left the Office, not wishing to arrive too soon and contract a rheumatism waiting behind the hedges in the damp; and, taking the walk at a leisurely pace, we got close to the cottage of the poacher about ten. The lights were all out, but we had ample proof that the inmate was neither absent nor asleep; for, as we left the road to get behind the opposite hedge, a crackling branch beneath M'Sweeny's foot caused the bell-mouth of a brass blunderbuss to appear instantly through a hole in the door, while at the same time a voice from within cried—"Anybody there?"

"Whist, ye divil!—no!" cried M'Sweeny across the road in a whisper. "It's only us, the detectives, watching yer place; keep quiet now, an' we'll trap him between us."

"All right," growled the poacher, and the muzzle of the weapon disappeared slowly into the house again, and the place was left silent and dark as before. Presently we started and listened. Footsteps were coming pattering along in our direction; but it was only a pair of sweethearts going chattering homewards, and they passed on, leaving us to a long silence. The next footstep did not deceive us. It was a decided stotter.

"Dot an' carry one; ould Snarley, by japers!" excitedly whispered M'Sweeny.

I said nothing, but gripped him hard by the arm to impress silence, and then peered through at the now cautious and softly-gliding figure. It made straight for the door of the cottage, with Snarley's unmistakable limp; then it stooped and listened intently, with its ear at the keyhole; and then M'Sweeny un-

guardedly emitted a loud sneeze that made the figure swing suddenly round to face the hedge behind which we were concealed. Without uttering a word, Snarley stooped and stooped, peering anxiously forward among the thick branches; and as he did so, the bell-mouth of the brass blunderbuss again came noiselessly through the hole in the door, this time pointing straight at the seat of Snarley's trousers.

"Anybody there?" quietly demanded the poacher from within.

Snarley started at the sound, but remained stooping, silent and motionless as an eccentric statue.

"Anybody there?" again demanded Marten.

There was a longer pause, and Snarley was not only still silent, but evidently trying to restrain his breathing.

"Well, I've warned ye," said the poacher in the same quiet tones. "There!"

There was a terrific explosion, a flashing blaze from the blunderbuss, and a yell of agony from Snarley; and then, clapping his two hands on the damaged seat of his trousers, the dog-stealer instantly straightened himself, and flew from the spot with the speed of an express train, and vanished from sight in the twinkling of an eye.

We ought to have pursued him, I know, but had the whole world depended on us doing so, we could not have moved at that moment. The whole scene was so irresistibly comical—even to the sudden straightening of Snarley's stooping figure upon receiving the shot—that for five minutes we could do nothing but stamp about among the wet clay behind that hedge, fairly powerless with laughter. When we at last pulled ourselves up, in pity for our aching sides, we discovered that we had been joined by the burly quarryman, Marten himself, who seemed quite as delighted with the issue of the adventure as we had been amused. Nothing would please him but we must go in and "pree" his bottle; and, when that was done, he insisted on accompanying us homeward a part of the way.

"I'll take care he don't come back and steal the dogs while I'm away," he said, fastening them both to a leash of twine, as he followed us out to the cool night air. "Snarley's worth watching, so I'll take 'em with me."

We passed along the road a good bit, talking and laughing rather noisily, with the dogs, as we thought, trailing behind by the leash, till close to the outskirts of the city, when Marten, with many thanks to us, turned to leave, and at the same time

happened to cast his eye down at the end of the leash. Then he started, and a sharp oath escaped his lips.

"Blast it! if one of the dogs ain't gone! Look!"

We did look, and saw plainly that the leash had been cut.

"Snarley's done me, after all," growled Marten hoarsely. "He can't be much hurt, for he has slipped up behind and bolted with one. Well, it don't matter much, 'cos only one of 'em was mine; and they're so like each other, that it's no matter which I have."

We left him there, cursing under his breath, and then we had our laugh out at him in turn as we stepped out briskly for home.

Meanwhile Snarley—who had been providentially saved by the thickness of his moleskin trousers, which with patches on the seat were nearly four-ply thick—was hurrying off to the Canongate by another route with the dirty stolen dog under his arm. He had really meant to steal both, but had found it impracticable; and contented himself with the thought that he might "nab the other soon." Arrived at his cellar, "the kind home for dogs," he took the leash from the dog's neck, heated some water, washed the poodle's muddy hide till the hair was white as snow, and then busied himself in combing and drying it, till the ugly-looking animal was completely changed in appearance. In the course of his labours a sudden thought had struck him whereby to test the identity of the dog with that of the lady's missing poodle, and the result of the test made him curse not a little.

"If I'd only boned the other one!" he said, in deep regret. "Well, never mind, I'll put a bit of pink ribbon round his neck, an' p'raps it'll go all right."

Very early in the morning—indeed, long before Miss Guggle was wont to descend from her bedchamber—a sharp ring at the front door bell caused her to start up and listen anxiously. She heard the servant answer the bell; then she heard some one with a gruff voice admitted to the lobby; and in a minute or two more the servant burst into her bedchamber with the joyful news—

"O, ma'am! Frederick William! he's come! and he's looking beautiful!"

Up sprang the lady; a dressing-gown and some other accessories were hurriedly thrown on; and then she descended to the drawing-room, and clasped the snowy poodle to her breast. There was no question of identity. She recognised it at a

glance ; it wore the very pink bow of ribbon which she had put on its neck with her own hands, and in her rapture she did not think two guineas at all an exorbitant charge for the trouble of tracing it. Snarley left the house chuckling, and at once changed his residence ; and, of course, M'Sweeny got a handsome testimonial from Miss Guggle for "his skill and acuteness in tracing a valuable and much prized animal."

I met Snarley many years after, and then, in confidence, he let me into the secret.

"'Twasn't her dog at all," he said to me, with a hoarse chuckle ; "the other was. Her dog never cowered before the whip, but just looked up as if he wanted beef. I tried the dog whenever I got home ; he flopped down at once whenever I lifted the whip, so I knew it wasn't hers. But what was the odds ? The two dogs was brothers, and the other pleased her just as well. I stole *her* dog from the quarryman a week arter, and sold him to a dog-performin' man, who canes him well, an' makes him work precious hard for his livin'. The other dog's fat and comfortable now ; but he's a usurper for all that "

Fatal likeness ! Alas ! poor Frederick William !

THE POWER OF KINDNESS.

I HAVE shown that Hugh M'Indoe, in spite of his fierce and quenchless hatred of all the fraternity of thieves, had still something human left in him—one tender spot in his heart which his feverish desire for vengeance had not turned to stone—and I have now to give another instance on account of more than one important result that rebounded from the simple act of kindness back on his own head. Up to this point M'Indoe had lived alone, shunning every companionship, admitting no confidant, however disinterested; acknowledging no friend in the wide wide world. He was now prematurely old, with features deeply sunken and hair thickly mixed with grey; and it was evident to me, as I gradually learned the strange story of his life, that there was a fire *within him* which, if not quenched, would quickly and surely land him in the grave. Now, however, he was to make one friend—one devoted to him heart and soul—and that in such an eccentric manner, and under such strange circumstances, that to me it seems interesting even apart from the results which followed.

Nosie Mincher was quite a boy—not above sixteen, I should say, at the highest guess, but in sin and cunning he was a perfect old man. It is not always the greatest thief who has the highest number of convictions scored against him; and Nosie, though we were morally certain that he had been a thief, and nothing but a thief, ever since he had been able to lay one hand above another, was one of those serpent-like members who managed to wriggle out of our clutches nearly twice out of every three cases. But that made little difference; for Nosie was incorrigible. No reproof from the Bench; no flogging, however heartily administered; no imprisonment, however prolonged, disturbed Nosie. He cared for nobody, and was always infinitely more determined when in custody than when slinking about at large. He was born a thief, and was destined, I thought, to die a thief; and yet, in spite of his cunning little eyes and ugly face, there was so much native

drollery about him, and such a readiness with witty answers, that I often regretted that he was doomed to a life of crime. And yet he was suddenly pulled up in the midst of his career. By what wondrous power was the change brought about? Just listen.

Nosie took his way along Rose Street one night shortly after ten o'clock, entered a public-house which he had long surveyed critically from every point of view, walked into one of the boxes, and called for a glass of beer, which he proceeded leisurely to consume, at the same time appearing to become suddenly interested in the contents of a newspaper which had been lying on the table, though the plain truth is that at this time he did not know a B from a bull's foot.

Half-an-hour after, the waiter entered the box and found it deserted. Concluding that the lad had retired after finishing his refreshment, the waiter removed the glass and paper, and thought of the circumstance no more. But Nosie was not gone. He had simply slipped into the adjoining box, and lying down all his length on the floor, had crouched close in below the wooden seat, there to patiently await the closing of the shop. No one discovered him or disturbed him in any way. At eleven o'clock every one was turned out of the shop; the waiter went through the boxes, shutting off the lights; and then after some washing of glasses, counting of money, and tidying up of the shop, Nosie saw the last gaslight extinguished, heard the retiring footsteps and the locking of the shop door from without, and knew that he was alone. After allowing half-an-hour to elapse, he took his way in the darkness straight to the till, in which he had seen so many shining coins snugly reposing an hour or so before; but what was his disgust and disappointment to find that every coin, with the exception of a few paltry coppers, had been removed! It is probable that Nosie swore roundly, and considered himself very ill-used; but, as I was not there to hear, of course I cannot state it as a fact. Philosophy, however, came to his aid at last, and he concluded that even coppers were better than nothing, pocketed every farthing, and then turned his attention to the stock. Here he was placed in a tantalising position—he could not consume much of the liquor without danger of capture, and he could not single-handed carry any great quantity away. After mature deliberation, he at last decided to appropriate and remove six bottles of brandy. These he removed to the back of the building; then he very quietly broke out by the window into the lane

behind; and then cut away over to a "fence" in St Mary's Wynd, to whom he disposed of the plunder for seven shillings.

Next day the robbery was duly reported, with this mistake—that the thieves were supposed to have *broken in* from the lane behind, which, as I have shown, was not the case. Considering the nature of the stuff removed, we had little hope of ever clapping eyes on it again, and might never have heard more of the affair, had not another ferret accidentally lighted on a clue, and at once proceeded to work it out for his own special benefit. That ferret, I need hardly say, was Simon Penbank.

This seedy and needy scoundrel happened to have some private business with the fence who had purchased the brandy, and in an unguarded moment was generously treated to a glass of the stolen liquor.

"Excellent—most excellent stuff," he said approvingly, as he laid down his glass, at the same time stealthily and swiftly running his eye over a label on the bottle. "It's from Drummond's, in Rose Street, too, the very place where that bungled affair was done a few days ago. Do you know who did that?" and the look of simplicity which he turned on the fence might have deceived a sharper villain.

The fence, with a knowing wink, replied, that he "had a good idea."

"A bungler, a disgrace to the profession," growled Penbank, with well-assumed wrath. "Who was it?"

"Nosie Mincher."

"What! that boy? all alone?" cried the spy, in real surprise. "Are you sure?"

"Sure, for that's a taste of the stuff you've just drunk. I gave him seven bob for the lot!"

This answer set the seedy spy a-thinking; and the thinking lasted all the way from St Mary's Wynd to M'Indoe's house in the Horse Wynd. The fact was, that he was by no means sure that M'Indoe's hatred would extend to such a trifling object as Nosie Mincher, and he was pondering how best to put the case so as to excite the smouldering feeling. He managed to throw an exultant smile over his dubious thoughts, and thus presented himself with the usual inquiry—

"Would you like to trap and jug another?"

M'Indoe, who never condescended to reward his hireling's activity with the slightest confidence, merely opened his eyes and scanned the other's treacherous countenance for some minutes in silence.

"That is a needless question," he said at last. "Is there any treachery to me under it?"

"Treachery! No, I regret to say that no one will bid for you," coolly returned the spy. "Like myself, every one fears you too much. It is a pity, but no matter."

"Well, who is to be the victim now?" impatiently demanded M'Indoe.

"Nosie Mincher," was the grave reply; and the speaker watched M'Indoe's face keenly as he pronounced the words, and of course at once read there a shade of disappointment.

"Nosie Mincher? Why, he does not belong to The Ruffian's gang; at least, he may work for them at rare times, but as a rule he works alone."

"True, but his sister belongs to them," quickly returned Penbank, as he saw two visionary sovereigns rapidly receding from sight. "Besides, my dear sir, I understood you to say that we were to hunt down all thieves, no matter how or where they work?"

"We?" indignantly returned M'Indoe, drawing himself up and looking down on the other as if he had been a snake, or some such loathsome reptile. "Do you dare for a moment to class me with yourself? But, there; I forget myself. Yes, he must suffer with the rest. Give me the particulars."

This Penbank proceeded with joyful alacrity to do; and then an appointment was arranged between the two to meet that night at the house of the fence in St Mary's Wynd, at an hour when Nosie Mincher was likely to be present. Now, on the very forenoon on which this interview took place, a strange crime was being committed out at Charles Street, near my own home, from which I was to be the principal sufferer, and which was destined to have an important influence on the whole of Nosie Mincher's after career.

I had at this time a remarkably intelligent terrier dog, which, through its cleverness and good temper, was a favourite with old and young in all the adjoining streets. Children, the veriest infants, were known to hug it and drag it about by forepaws or tail in the most painful positions, and yet poor Spark was known never to lose his temper or use his teeth. I could fill whole pages with his tricks and feats, but I will mention only one fact: Spark could never be stolen. Of course, he was actually carried off, out of spite or greed, more than a dozen times; but after an interval of seclusion, during which he would feign an extraordinary affection for his new master, he would be

allowed a breath of fresh air, and would at once take to his heels—feet, I mean—and reappear at his old home, very dirty, and sometimes so exhausted as to be hardly able to crawl. I need scarcely add that I would not have taken any amount of money in exchange for it; and that any one wishing to injure me could not have hit upon a surer plan than to torture poor Spark.

On the forenoon in question, then, Spark was observed by more than one in Charles Street—my wife among the rest—sitting up on its haunches on the pavement, and “begging” from a low suspicious-looking lad of sixteen or so, who was rewarding it with bits of beef taken at intervals from his pocket. No suspicion was excited, although Spark soon made his way up to the house displaying a degree of restlessness and thirst quite unaccountable, till I got home in the afternoon, when I found it panting on the hearth-rug, and hardly able to crawl towards me.

“That dog is ill,” I said at once, lifting it in my arms. “What have you been giving it to eat?”

“It has had nothing but water since it came up from the street, where a laddie was feeding it with bits of meat,” was the concerned reply.

“What was the laddie like?”

“Oh, a keelie-looking fellow about sixteen—one of your ‘bairns,’ I believe. I was afraid he meant to steal it; that was why I watched.”

“Had he a jacket out at both elbows, a little turned-up nose, and small dark eyes, very cunning in the expression?”

“Yes.”

“I thought so. Nosie Mincher. I’m afraid the poor dog is poisoned.”

I said no more, but took the poor beast up in my arms, and ran with it to the nearest chemist’s shop. An antidote was at once administered; but it was given blindly, perhaps too late, and certainly without success. Poor Spark died in my arms, in great agony, in less than two hours; and the veterinary surgeon to whom I had taken it then ascertained beyond a doubt that it had been poisoned with white arsenic concealed in square pieces of boiled beef.

Poor Spark! I am not ashamed to say, that when I laid it down on the floor at my feet, the tears were standing as thick in my eyes as if it had been a child, not a dog. I buried it with my own hands, and then, instead of going home for dinner

and tea, started off to hunt for the young fiend who had deprived it of life.

It was late—nearly nine o'clock—before I came upon any trace of my quarry, and nearly an hour later before I actually sighted him; but when I did, I believe the look in my eyes for a moment froze him to the spot.

The next moment he was speeding like a race-horse down the Canongate; but he was either less swift than usual in his motions, or indignation and rage had lent me strength, for I collared him at the Abbey Well, down near Holyrood, and nearly shook the life out of him before I could find breath to utter a word.

"Wot 'ave I done?" he defiantly asked at length, noting with surprise that I choked over the words.

"Done! you've poisoned poor Spark, for one thing," I managed to gasp out. "Had you no heart in you at all? Could you not have put out your spite, if you have any, upon me, instead of deliberately torturing a poor dumb animal to death?" and then, unwilling though I was to show emotion before him, the tears got into my eyes in spite of me.

"I've no spite agin you," he doggedly returned, after a pause.

"Then, why did you do it? I would willingly have lost ten pounds rather than that the poor beast should have been sacrificed," I quickly returned. "I have witnesses who can identify you, who saw you do it."

The old defiant look came into his eyes. I knew it in a moment. It said—"Imprison me, torture me, do what you like to me—what do I care? It don't harm me—it won't make me a bit better—I really enjoy it!" For the first time, in spite of my own rage, I felt a touch of pity for the lost young wretch; and then like a flash the thought came to me to try him in a new fashion.

"Ah, Nosie," I said, in a tone of gentle reproach, letting go his arm at the same moment, "you have no reason to like me, but you might have spared my wee dog."

Nosie made no reply, but trudged on by my side, without once attempting to escape; but it struck me that his wondering eyes fixed steadily on my face were becoming goggly and glistening.

"I'm not going to take you up," I continued. "What good would it do to you or to me either? Poor Spark is dead now. Go away, and never let me see your face more. I hope you're

satisfied that you've injured me ; cut me to the heart. Good-night."

I turned away, but to my astonishment he did not leave my side.

"You're bubbling," he said, in a husky voice at last ; "I know you're bubbling, 'cos I see it in your eyes."

"So would you, Nosie, if the dog had been yours."

This answer appeared to be a poser. He fidgeted and shuffled for a moment or two, and at last blurted out—

"Take me up, Jamie ; I don't want to be let off now. I sort o' deserve quod."

"No ; the affair is my own, and I forgive you. Go away."

"But I don't want to be forgive," he persisted ; "I want to be took up. I'm real sorry I done it ; but just wait till I get out again, and I'll steal ye another in its place that'll be worth two of it."

This well-meant offer, far from appeasing me, only roused my indignation.

"What ! not content with injuring me, would you inflict a similar injury upon another ?" I cried, bursting with rage. "Upon my word, Nosie, I believe I had better take you up after all ; to forgive you and let you off is only mistaken leniency. You'll be a thief, whether you're caught and punished or let off, to the end of the chapter. It is meanness itself to go hunking and grabbing at other people's hard earnings instead of working for yourself. Bah ! I'd rather hawk matches from door to door !"

"I'm sorry I'm a prig," he said, in a subdued tone. "But, then, the pegs ain't all like you ; they don't give a cove a chance ; they're only too glad to grab us. You'd better take me up. I'll never be a bit better."

"Did you ever try ?"

"Try ?" he echoed, with a flash lighting his glistening eyes. "I've been trying ever since I was so high. 'Taint a bit o' use. But I will say one thing : I didn't plan to poison your Spark."

"You didn't ?" I echoed in surprise. "Who did, then ?"

He fidgeted and remained silent a moment, and then slowly answered—

"I can't say no more than that the order came from The Ruffian."

"And you were to be paid for it ?"

"Yes ; but I'll never take it—couldn't find the heart. Tell

ye, after I give poor Spark the first bit, and saw him looking up in my face so thankful and happy like, I was well-nigh burstin' out a bubblin' at what I'd done, and I only gave him the rest to put him the quicker out of pain. Then I called myself the cursedst prig that ever deserved the salt box."

"Then The Ruffian is really back to town again?" I asked, having heard that he had prudently evaporated after the attempted escape at the Lock-up.

"Certainly; and wot's more," and Nosie's voice sunk to a whisper, "I heerd—I don't know whether it's a straight tip or not—I heerd that M'Indoe's to be pitched into—"

"How?"

"I don't know; I don't want to know," said Nosie uneasily. "I mean to do a bolt some night, and turn over a new leaf. It ain't much good bein' a prig arter all, cos, if ye miss the spots, ye're always in the power of yer pals; and they're not like you—they don't forgive *none*. Oh, Jamie, I never thought ye'd let me off for that. But, look here!" and he stopped in the middle of the street and lifted up his right hand. "I'm in earnest, and I swear it; I'll go away in the morning and never trouble ye more. I'll try to be square; there, I mean it; and, if that don't do, I'll try a starve. I'm done with prigs from this minute!"

It was now my turn to open my eyes in surprise and pleasure, and as I did so I took his dirty paw within my own and shook it warmly.

"Well, I wish you every success," I said; "and if you want any help—"

"None, none—not a maik," he emphatically returned, stopping my hand on its way to my pocket. "I can't bear to see you so soft; it cuts me worse nor the awfulest whopping, it makes me feel such an awful bad 'un. Don't mind me—I—I can't help it—so I can't;" and now the tears came like rain from his eyes, while his ragged cuff went up to wipe them away in a dabbling, smearing way, which proved so ineffectual that at last he had to snatch off his dirty fragment of a cap and use it with both hands as a handkerchief.

After a minute or two he got more calm and subdued, and said to me in a whisper as he turned away—

"Don't say nothing to nobody about me goin' away, or turnin' square, or anything. 'Twould do no good. P'raps you'll hear o' me bein' hunted down by clumpertons for being a prig tryin' to get work, and maybe you'll read in the papers of

me bein' found dead in a hole with a half-gnawed turnip in my hand. But never mind—except you might give my sister a bit of a hint that the one wot was found starved was me, and that she'll come to that, too, in the end, if she don't change. I'm off now. I've only to go down to a fence in St Mary's Wynd, and lift some of my togs and go. Good-bye, sir, good-bye! When I'm caved in and gone, you'll remember that my last thought was of you, and the poor dog I poisoned, wot you wouldn't take me up for doin' "

"Ah, believe me, it won't turn out nearly so bad as that," I cheerily remarked; "I've seen many a more hopeless case turn out well."

"I don't know," he sadly returned, with a gloomy shake of the head: "I've had a presentiment of something awful to happen me hanging over me for days, afore ever I was set on to poison your dog. I can't shake it off, nohow. 'Twould be just wot I deserve. Never mind. Good-bye, and thank ye all the same."

Nosie left me there and then, and while I pursued my way homeward, not sure whether to feel glad or depressed, he turned down St Mary's Wynd and made straight for the house of the man who had fenced the stolen brandy. Nosie's step was heavy and slow, and his whole manner a strange contrast to his former gaiety and sprightliness. For the first time in his life I believe Nosie had begun to think. He reached the den of the fence—a single room on the first floor, looking into some tanyards at the back—and asked for his clothes. But when they were brought out and thrown down on the table before him, he still continued to stare thoughtfully, and almost tearfully, into the fire.

"What's the matter, Nosie?" cautiously inquired the fence. "You look down in the mouth. Going to make a change?"

"I am going to make a change—leastaways, going to try it," said Nosie, rousing himself and mechanically beginning to change his clothes.

"Got to leave on account of the spots, I s'pose?" added the fence.

"No, not that at all," reservedly answered Nosie; "something that concerns myself—hist! who's that?"

Both listened breathlessly, for it struck them that two pairs of heavy feet were approaching the door; but the peculiar knock came, and then with some relief they recognised and admitted only Simon Penbank.

The eyes of the seedy spy glittered greedily as they lighted on Nosie's half-stripped figure, and in a moment he had seized the lad's hand and shaken it warmly.

"Nosie Mincher," he cried, with ecstasy; "my dear young friend, you are the very person whom, of all others, I wished to see. I hope you are quite well? Do not—oh, do not say that you are ill!"

"Stow that," gruffly returned Nosie. "When you smile and pile up the words, and try to make that bag o' pimples you call a face look sweet, you al'ys mean mischief."

"Nay, but believe me I had a reason for asking," returned Penbank, perfectly undisturbed by the imputation. "Do you think you could bear the fatigue of a journey?"

"I hope so, for I mean to take one," was the dignified rejoinder.

"You do? Good—good! But, pray, do not disturb yourself with any intricate arrangements. The journey, of course, is only up to the Police-Office."

"What!"

The word came from Nosie's throat with a burst, and was instantly echoed by the startled fence.

"The vicissitudes of life—how remarkable, how wonderful are they to contemplate!" sweetly continued Simon Penbank. "To-day, you are roaming the city, free and unfettered; to-night, you shall sleep in a jail!"

Nosie Mincher turned ghastly white, as an inkling of the truth dawned upon him, and sank helplessly into a chair.

"Wot do ye mean?" he slowly got out.

"I mean that I, who this morning did not possess a copper, will to-night earn two sovereigns. I have revealed that little Rose Street affair, and here is a gentleman who will kindly assist you up to the Police-Office;" and as he spoke he threw open the door, before which he had planted himself, and revealed the stern and unflinching face of M'Indoe.

The reformed thief stalked in without a word, for his dreaded presence had completed the work which the spy's smooth words had begun, and both Nosie and the fence were crouching down terror-stricken and defenceless.

The fence began to pour out a flood of entreaties, but Nosie only sighed deeply, and covered his face with his hands. Hugh M'Indoe, with a face of iron, turned to the waiting spy.

"Run down and bring up a policeman; we may want him in case of resistance."

The spy disappeared, and M'Indoe closed the door after him, placed his back against it, and glared down on the two shrinking figures in silence.

"Oh, spare me, Hughie! I meant to turn over a new leaf," cried Nosie, suddenly springing forward with a piteous cry of entreaty, and dropping on his knees before M'Indoe. "Give a cove one chance!—only one, Hughie—only one! Have mercy on me; don't send me to prison at such a time!"

"Mercy?" echoed the remorseless avenger, with a fierce laugh. "Don't speak the word in my presence—don't! or I may forget myself, and strangle you both with my own hands. Mercy? What mercy did my poor Kate receive? Hunted down! hunted down! Out upon you both! You shall have mercy—THIEVES' MERCY!"

"But even M'Govan let me off to give me a chance," eagerly pleaded Nosie. "And I was goin' off to turn over a new leaf."

"Turn over a new leaf?" repeated the stern hunter of thieves. "Yes, when you tumble into your grave; when the lid of your coffin is turned over and screwed down, not before; don't think it!"

Nosie started up, looked straight into M'Indoe's face for a moment with an eye as bright and fiery as his own, and then went backwards against the sash of the window like a flash. The rotten wood and glass gave way with a great crash and jingle, and Nosie, in trousers and shirt, went tumbling with it, head over heels, to the ground—cut, bleeding, and half-stunned, but desperate enough at the moment to have thrown himself through a stone wall. The distance was only a few feet, and M'Indoe, after the momentary start and shout of surprise, was down after him with one bound.

"You may kill me, but you sha'n't take me to the Office!" shouted Nosie, as he sprang to his feet, and was off like a shot across the green, over the wall like a monkey, and down with one desperate leap on the other side.

M'Indoe, who was an old hand at the same feat, followed scarcely less swiftly, and got up on the wall, only expecting to see the white figure of Nosie disappearing from sight in the distance. What was his astonishment, then, to find that the wall on the other side was nearly thrice as deep, and that Nosie, springing blindly down in the darkness, had evidently fallen awry and hurt himself; for plainly in the tan-yard below could be discerned a white shirted figure crawling slowly across the yard,

vainly trying to suppress groans of anguish, and with but one object in view, speeding towards safety. M'Indoe dropped cautiously, and was at Nosie's side in an instant. The lad had stopped crawling now, and only lay there panting and groaning, with his eyes fixed reproachfully on his capturer.

"Are you hurt, Nosie?" asked M'Indoe, with more tenderness than the other believed him capable of showing, and stooping to try to raise him from the ground.

"I am hurt; I think my leg's broke under me," was the gasping reply. "You did it, Hughie—you did—after I was let off by the spots, and going to turn over a new leaf. They had more mercy than you. Wot did I ever do to you that ye should hunt me down?"

The piteous inquiry, with the pallid and blood-stained face of the boy, appeared to strike M'Indoe dumb. There was even a slight glistening softening the glare of his eyes as he once more tried to raise the lad in his arms, and was again pushed off.

"Don't! don't!" gasped Nosie. "There's no mercy in you, nor in any one wot's been a thief. You've done the job; so let me lie. I'm better out o' the world than tryin' to turn over a new leaf. Leave me here till I'm dead, and then put me in the coffin wot you spoke of, and mark on the lid, 'I hunted him down—serves him right.' Keep off! keep off!" and in the desperate struggle that followed, Nosie gave a low moan in turning himself, and fainted clean away.

M'Indoe did not leave him lying; nor did he wait to deliver him into the hands of the police. No; without a word he gathered the poor lad up in his arms, got out of the yard by the Back Canongate below, and ran with him—yes, ran—as swiftly as legs could bear him, all the way up the Cowgate to his own home in the Horse Wynd. There he deposited him on his own bed, left him under care of a neighbour, and sped off in the same way for one of the best doctors at the south side, whose fee he paid in advance to prevent hesitation or delay. Nosie's broken leg was thus carefully set, his cuts bandaged up, and his shaken spine bound up tight, and himself left to repose and quiet, with as patient and devoted a nurse, in the person of M'Indoe, as ever sat by a bedside and wanted sleep for whole nights at a time.

Penbank received the money he had earned, but the case was never submitted to us. And when Nosie recovered no persuasion could induce him to leave M'Indoe. He clung to

him, and his garret and his smiddy, with a pertinacious devotion that nothing could shake, and swung away at the forehammer as if his slender frame had been that of a Hercules.

“I sha’n’t never be no great smith,” he said to me in confidence more than once; “but anything’s better nor priggish; and who knows but, if I stick to him, I may be able to do something in return for all his goodness to me? Nobody knows him like me, and some as I know don’t wish him well. I’m keepin’ a eye on ’em. Wait!” and with a very knowing lowering of his left eyelid, and a tug at his forelock with his grimy hand, he would leave me to speculate on the meaning of his words, and to smile at the idea of his weak arm being a protection.

REPAYING A CHILD STRIPPER.

I HAVE often wondered that child-stripping is not more severely punished. It is one of the anomalies of our law that this crime—the after effects of which may stamp it as murder—is, in the first instance, punished only by a short imprisonment; just as a wife-beater, who has given his wife the blow which is ultimately to bring about her death, sometimes goes chuckling from the bar with a sentence of only twenty or thirty days. Child-stripping, the most heartless and diabolical of crimes, ought to be severely dealt with; indeed, I look forward in hope to a time when not imprisonment, but penal servitude for a term of years, shalt be dealt out for the first offence.

One terribly cold afternoon in February, when the east wind was cutting up the Back Canongate and through the Cowgate, and chasing every one from the streets, a rough labourer, who had been wandering aimlessly through the town, till the frost should be pleased to leave and allow him work, turned into a common stair in the Cowgate for shelter from the blast, and was astonished to hear a tiny shivering voice crying—

“Kakie’s cauld, cauld! Kakie wants her kose.”

Following the direction of the sobbing sounds, the man peered down through the dim light and saw what, rough as he was, caused him to shudder and shake like a woman. A little girl of some three or four years sat on the worn stone-step in the dark, with not a single article of clothing on but a little chemise. Boots, stockings, hat, frock, everything was gone; and there she sat blue and chilled with cold, cowering against the wall, shoving her little hands into her mouth to warm them, and already nearly insensible with the icy draught sweeping past her, and out at the unglazed stair-window behind. For a moment the strong man was speechless with horror, and again the child faintly lisped out—

“Oh, I want my kose! The woman tooked my kose, and said I was to wait here for my mammy. Mammy’s no come, and Kakie’s cauld, cauld!”

Tears of sympathy sprang into the man's eyes, and, hastily stooping, he lifted the shivering child and gathered her close in under his coat.

"What's yer name, my wee lass?" he huskily inquired.

"Kakie 'Oss."

"Katie Ross; and where do ye stay? Where's your mammy's place?"

This, however, was a step beyond the child's powers, and he could only get out of her that "the woman tooked her away," and that her home was "uppy—uppy."

"Sure, that must mean up the street," reasoned the man; "but I can't murder the wee thing by taking it out in the cowl without a stitch on its back. I'll go in here, and maybe some kind-hearted woman 'll give it a shelter till wanst I find the mother."

He went up the stair and knocked at the first door that came to his hand in the darkness. A flash of light fell on him and the child when the door opened, explaining the case in a moment far more effectually than he could have done in words; and in a few moments Katie was not only warmly dressed in some of the woman's own children's things, but wrapped up in a warm blanket taken from her bed as well; and then with a hastily called-in policeman leading the way, and the labourer carrying Katie, they slowly began to make their way up the Cowgate, intending of course to turn up the Fishmarket Close to the Central Police Office.

I say "slowly" advisedly, and no one who knows what the Cowgate is will have any difficulty in understanding the cause. The majority dwelling in this place are very poor, and a great number of them Irish—warm-hearted, voluble, and excitable; and the moment Katie was borne forth into the street, wrapped in the blanket and attended by a policeman, the deserted street was instantly alive with rushing, inquiring, and sympathising mothers. There are some wise people, I know, who hold that the very poor cannot have any great love for children, and these I shall neither attempt to answer nor put right. But in this case the excited mothers blocked the street from side to side; they crowded round Katie; they kissed her white face; they asked a thousand questions; they clenched their hands and brandished their nails in the air, when speaking of the heartless thief that had stripped her; they even dropped tears down on the blanket, and at the same moment wished that the most appalling retribution might overtake the criminal;

and still the crowd gathered and swelled till Katie's bearers were almost at a stand-still, and the hoarse commotion swelled and rose till a crowd almost as great was formed up above against the railings of the South Bridge.

At last, somewhere near the foot of Blair Street, Katie was asked about the hundredth time by one woman in the crowd what was her name, and as she gave the old reply, "Kakie 'Oss—the woman tooked my kose," the inquirer cried—

"There's a Mrs Ross newly come to the tap flat o' oor stair; I wonder if this is ane o' her bairns?"

"Run and see!" shouted about a hundred voices in a breath, and, though the command was an utter impossibility—the woman being now jammed firmly in the crowd—the crowd swayed heavily in the direction of the stair indicated, and voices outside took up the message, and eager feet rushed up to the house, where the messengers burst suddenly in upon a poor woman at a wash-tub with the startling words—

"Have you a wee lassie ca'ed Katie?"

"Yes. Oh, what's wrang? She's no killed?"

"No; but somebody's strippit her, and left her in the cauld wi' only her wee sark on, and there's a policeman taking her away to the Office wrappit in a blanket."

The mother heard no more. Bareheaded, and with the soap-suds thick on her arms, she flew from the house and down the stairs. At the bottom a loud murmur greeted her appearance, which swelled to a shout when Katie eagerly put forth a hand from the blanket crying—

"Mammy, mammy! oh, dinna wheep me! Me's cauld, cauld; for the woman tooked my kose and never come back."

The crowd opened up now, as if by magic, and with an eager cry the poor mother rushed forward and snatched the warm bundle from the man's hands; but as she bent down to passionately kiss the face, a peculiar and alarming distortion passed over the features of the child, and one of the crowding mothers cried—

"The bairn's faintit! Run for a doctor, some o' ye—quick, now; ye can dae that much for the puir body, surely? I doobt the puir wee thing's to be the waur o' this."

"My bairn! My dear wee Katie! if onything comes ower her it'll kill me," screamed the mother; and then she was accompanied up to the house by about half-a-dozen voluntary nurses and helpers, who, with the utmost tenderness and kindness, helped tō strip Katie and bring her back to consciousness.

Two medical men soon arrived ; and they both commended the steps that had already been taken for the restoration of the little victim ; but taking into consideration the delicate state of the child's health, they gravely warned the mother that she would still require the utmost care and attention. I myself arrived shortly after ; but by this time Katie was a little flushed and feverish, and all I could get out of her was that the woman who "tooked her kose" had staring, fearsome eyes, and that her breath had a strong odour of "fisky." Katie said that she was "fichty, fichty—like a booman," by which I understood that the woman had a repulsive appearance, such as would be likely to repel and frighten a child. Now, though child-stripping is fortunately not so common in Edinburgh as some other places—Glasgow, for instance—we generally find that the perpetrators of the crime proceed from the class indicated by Katie's mention of the word "fisky." Most thieves are drunken and cruel enough ; but there is a lower stage still which may be reached, and that is occupied by the sottish thief, whose insatiable crave for drink outmasters every good prompting, and goads him on to the most mean and heartless of thefts.

At first I fancied that the crime was the work of an amateur ; but the vague clues given by the fevered child, and a long process of thinking on my own part, at last seemed to point me to a woman called Peg Ryan, a worthless, sottish wretch, with one child, who had already been twice through our hands for dastardly thefts of the same kind, and once for sending out her child to beg.

The clothes stolen were easily traced to a pawn shop in the Canongate, where they were found in their entirety, bundled up and pawned for fifteen pence ; but, unluckily, the person who had taken them in had been rather hurried at the time, and could not say certainly whether the pledger had been a woman or a child. Still I did not despair of making a case, and with this end in view I called and re-called nearly a dozen times at Peg Ryan's old quarters in the Happy Land and her lodging in the Grassmarket, which she had never gone near since the night of the theft ; but I failed to see her. She had not left the town—of that I was sure ; but being a sot of the lowest type, she was so short of funds that she preferred sleeping out at night, to wanting the whisky upon which she lived.

On the afternoon of the third day, in pursuing my search, I happened to find myself at the foot of the stair leading up to

Katie's home, and, more by instinct than for any special reason, I turned up to inquire how she was. I found her laid in a little cot before the fire, with her father—a labourer, as I took him to be by his dress—seated gravely by her side, with his head leaning on his hands. The mother appeared more bright and cheerful than I had seen her, and welcomed me with a smile. I approached the cot softly on tiptoe, and looked in on the sleeping child. Her face was changed; it was more rosy, more intensely beautiful; but it was a beauty that sent a chill to my heart, for I had seen it on a child of my own years before. I listened to the breathing, which was terribly heavy, touched the wrist for a moment with my finger, and then turned away in silence.

"She's a great deal better the day, and the doctor says I'm to gie her a teaspoonfu' o' brandy every hour," whispered the unsuspecting mother. "He says it's been inflammation of the lungs; but we're just to tak great care o' her, and gang on the way we're daein' "

I said nothing; I did not dare even to raise my eyes, lest that watchful eager eye should read anything in my own glance. The poor father gave a deep sigh and bent lower down, with his hand shielding his face. A sudden frightened cry from the child startled us all round into an alarmed circle in front of the cot.

"Mammy! mammy! The woman! she'll kake me. Oh, mammy!" cried the child, suddenly starting from a dream, and in the sudden strength nearly sitting up erect in bed, with eyes bright and dilated with terror.

"No, no," cried the mother, gathering her up in her arms and lifting her out of the cot. "My wee Katie, mammy's wee doo, s'leep bonnie, an' mammy'll no let the woman take ye. There's the gentleman that'll tak her and pit her in the polly offis."

"She's 'oond 'ere!" fearfully whispered the fevered child, trying to look over her mother's arm. "No letty near Kakie!"

"No, no; we'll no let her near Katie," soothingly murmured the mother. "We'll pit her in the dark polly offis."

"No, no; no pittty inny polly offis," faintly answered the child, sinking back reassured. "It's cauld inny polly offis, an' dark—no pittty woman in 'ere."

The mother bent lower, till I could not see her face, but I saw the tears drop down on the face of the child, and the twitching of her hand as she softly adjusted the folds of the blanket about the little form

"Me's a' better now, mammy," said Katie, trying to sit up. "Me want my kose on, for me's goin' to sing."

"Whishtie, whishtie! Ye canna sing—yer no able," said the poor mother, raising her in her arms to a sitting posture. "Ye maun lie in yer bed, and get strong, strong first."

"No, me can singy now," persisted the child; and then in a husky broken way she began—

'How kind was the Saviour to bid 'ose child'en welcome.'

But there the cough seized her; and, leaning back on her mother's bosom, she murmured, "Sing it, mammy—Kakie's gotty cauld—sing 'Suffer the child'en to come unto Me.'"

"No, no! Mammy canny sing that!" huskily ejaculated the poor mother at last. "Mammy canny dae wi'oot her wee Katie. Katie 'll get strong, strong, and sing it hersel'."

The child did not appear to hear the words, for she lay back breathing heavily, with a bright flush on either cheek, and a slight drooping of the eyes, which for the first time seemed to startle and alarm the poor mother.

"She's awfu' cauld; I think it's time I was giein' her some brandy," she cried in sudden fear. "She—she surely canna be turnin' waur?"

Another sudden start and wild clutch from the child arrested her motion towards the table.

"Mammy! Mammy!"

"Yes, yes, my wee lamb. Mammy's here."

"No pitty woman inny polis offis." These words came out with a slow, painful effort; and then apparently pleased that she had made herself understood, Katie leant back on her mother's bosom with a sweet smile lighting her whole face, and the shiny brilliance gradually fading out of her eyes. Her breathing became long-drawn, and the whole expression of her face more *distant*, as if the soul were fighting hard to leave the body, and then roused from her stupor, the poor mother forgot herself and screamed out—

"Katie! Katie! speak to mammy!" Then a faint flicker of intelligence seemed to come back to the eyes; the lips were slowly moved, and in a faint slow whisper came the three words—

"Kakie's—cauld—cau—ld!"

A few more struggled breathings and Katie's bright spirit was free, speeding upwards, beautiful and immortal, to where cold, and winter, and crime, and sorrow are alike unknown!

We took the still form from the arms of the stupefied mother

and laid it gently in the empty cot ; and then the terrible revulsion came, and with screams and hysterical tearing of the hair, the poor mother implored us to kill her that she might be with Katie.

I left them there, with a few of the kindly neighbours who had been attracted by the cries ; and the wild wail of sympathy and sorrow that went through the whole district must be imagined, for it is utterly beyond my power to describe it. I searched pretty closely during the rest of the day for the cause of all the mischief, Peg Ryan, and it was late ere I gave the task up ; but it was not till next forenoon, at eleven o'clock, that I fairly sighted the jade, slipping into a close at the foot of the Canongate, as if to avoid me.

Gliding swiftly into the narrow entry after her, I caught her by the tawdry shawl with the sharp words—

“Stop, Peg Ryan ! I’ve been searching for you, and nobody but you, for some days. How could you ever find it in your heart to do such a thing—you who are yourself a mother, and thus supposed to know what a mother’s feelings are?”

That stubborn, defiant look which old offenders use to screen themselves from any unguarded utterances crept over her bloated face at once, and staring me boldly in the face, she said—

“I don’t know what you mean.”

“No,” I gravely answered, “I believe *that*. You do not know what I mean ; for the child is dead.”

She started now, and paled a little ; but, still defiant, recovered herself, and tried to force a laugh.

“What child?” she cunningly answered. “My child is well and strong, for I left her only five minutes ago.”

“Yes, your child may be, but the child in the Cowgate which you stripped and left in the cold never recovered, and died yesterday ; so now you will understand to what the charge may develop.”

She staggered slightly, and leant pale and ghastly against the side of the close.

“I—I never heard of such a thing,” she faintly got out at last ; “and I—I never stripped a child in the Cowgate in my life.”

“I hope so ; from the bottom of my heart I hope you may be able to prove it,” I earnestly answered. “I should not like to think that a mother could do such a thing ; but two or three circumstances seem to point to you, and you alone, as

the criminal. If you can explain away these things, it will be well for yourself."

The sullen look came back to her eyes, and she sharply and impudently cried—

"It's not for me to explain anything—it's for you to prove me guilty."

I remained silent. Ignorant, debased, and sottish though she was, she had acutely hit our only weak point

"Come away; it is useless to hang on here wasting time in talk," I said; and finding her still stubborn, I laid my hand on her arm and tugged her out of the entry.

"I won't go!" she cried; and then like a fool she squatted down on the pavement and refused to stir, which was the height of madness on her part, as before the policeman on the beat could catch sight of my signal and get to my side, a crowd had collected, whose murmurs, as they learned the cause of the arrest, began to swell ominously in her ears. At first there were only a few children and one or two men, but by and by, by some magic telegraphy, the bare heads and arms of women began to bob up around us, gabbling, tearing, and fighting to get a look at our prisoner. Peg Ryan moved now, white with fear and shrinking from the eager claws on every side; but still the crowd swelled, and shouted, and yelled; and now I saw that nearly every one of the hooters was a woman. We had got her a little bit past the Tolbooth Station, intending to march her right up to the Head Office; but now when the crowd was nearly as wide as the street, I began to tremble for the wretched woman's life, and tried to turn, and by a hasty movement gain the shelter of the station-house. In an instant the move was detected, and with a hoarse cry the crowd swarmed up in our way, so effectually cutting off our retreat that two of the stationary men sighting the trouble had to literally fight their way in to our assistance. "What's wrang? Oh, it's the woman that strippit the bairn in the Coogate; the bairn dee'd yesterday, and that detective's been away catchin' the woman that did it. Ouf! Kill her! Pull her heid aff!" These and a hundred other cries swelled up around us, and were caught and re-echoed by the struggling women outside. Seeing that it was utterly impossible now to turn back, I made a sudden turn to press up the Canongate, where the crowd was at the moment thinned; but at the same moment one woman close behind us, with the rapidity of lightning, thrust out a long arm, seized the prisoner's hair, bonnet and all, and with one terrific wrench

had removed half of the hair, nearly dragging the scalp with it. The action was the work of but a moment. I heard the prisoner's scream and glanced round, but I saw only the hand with the hair and bonnet shreds vanish like a flash among the elated mob. The next moment an enormous potato, snatched from a grocer's door, came spinning forward from the front, and hit our prisoner full in the teeth.

"Run! run! For Heaven's sake, run!" I shouted in her ear, shoving madly forward, after tugging down my hat as a slight protection from the flying missiles. "Run, or you'll never reach the Office alive!"

Thoroughly alive to the great and increasing danger of her position, the miserable wretch made a desperate effort to struggle forward; but the movement was only partially successful, for, although there were now four of us about her, every turn of our bodies let in some of the women's busy hands and arms; till at last, fearing that not a rag would be left on her body, and actually afraid that the crowd would inflict a fatal injury on her, the idea struck me to take sudden and swift refuge in the pawnbroker's in which the child's stolen clothes had been disposed of. Passing the word to her and the men, I managed to get on the pavement for some distance, and then, the moment we were opposite the entrance, with a swift dive we disappeared, and were comparatively safe before the bulk of the crowd had missed us. My first business, of course, was to despatch a messenger to the High Office for a *posse* of men; and when this was done, I turned to the pawnbroker's assistant who had received the stolen goods, and placing Peg in a good light, asked if he could identify her as the person who pawned the child's clothes. I was sorry for it, but it could not be helped; the lad could not swear to her. The woman appeared intensely relieved; but was rather damped when we told her that she was not yet free, or likely to be so for some time. In ten minutes a strong relay of men came down from the Office, and amidst a commotion which I have seldom seen equalled, we got her at last to the Head Office, bleeding, torn, and ghastly, and actually thankful for the cells as a place of safety. Next morning she was remitted to the Sheriff-Court, and after the usual interval the trial came on. She was arraigned on two counts—first, the child-stripping; and second, a theft from a common green. As I had expected, the evidence on the first and most important count fell through. One man had actually seen a woman resembling the

prisoner go into the entry with the child on the night of the theft, but he could not swear to her face, from the simple fact that he had not seen it. The second count held good though, and being an old offender, the sentence was imprisonment for three calendar months. Something like a hiss ran round the Court as the sentence was pronounced, and a smile of relief flitted across the prisoner's lips; but one woman with cheeks wet with tears, just as she had appeared in the witness-box, started up like a flash, with her eyes fixed steadily on the prisoner, and her hand raised wildly towards Heaven. It was the mother of wee Katie.

"My bairn! my bonny wee Katie! ye killed her!" she cried, with a wild intensity of feeling that thrilled every one present. "If there's a God abune us, ye'll never come to ony guid! I'll hunt ye doon, an' see ye dee in a ditch afore the year's oot. As ye have dune to others, so will I dae to you! An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, a life for a life!"

The prisoner cowered and shrank, and looked so pale that I thought she was going to faint; but Mr Ross interposed, and gently forced his wife from the Court, in which even the matter-of-fact judge had not had the heart to interrupt her. Then the prisoner was removed, and her child—a girl of seven or eight years—ordered to be taken to the poorhouse till the completion of her sentence. This girl was commonplace looking enough, and both ragged and dirty; and though I have a good memory for faces, it would have puzzled me to pick her out from a dozen more a week after the trial. But it was not so with Mrs Ross. The face of the girl had become in some way graven on her memory, as I have now to show, in giving the last scene in this strange affair.

Towards the close of the autumn of the same year the Rosses, who had removed out about a mile west of the city to a cottage on the farm at which the husband had got work, were seated in the deepening sunset at their simple supper, when a gentle tap came to the door which elicited from the wife the impatient remark—

"Oh, it's only a beggar—a ragged wee lassie. I saw her gaun to the ither doors. Dinna disturb yersel."

The knock was repeated, and then when no answer was made they heard the feet patter round to the back of the house. Curious to see what the loiterer could want there, Mrs Ross softly slipped out of the kitchen, and noiselessly opened a chink of the back-room door. The window was open, and a dirty

arm already thrust in towards one of Mrs Ross's dresses hanging on the shutter ; but it was not this circumstance so much as a distinct glimpse of the girl's face which called such a startled exclamation from Mrs Ross as to instantly bring her husband to her side.

"It's that woman Ryan's lassie, the woman that killed oor wee Katie!" she breathlessly whispered, gripping her husband in intense excitement as he was about to shout an alarm. "S—s—sh! let her steal it! let her tak onything—everything we hae—only let her be a thief, that I may pay back the child-stripper by pitting them baith in jail. There! she's got it now—oot after her and catch her! her mother canna be far off!"

With a loud cry the husband darted into the room and out at the open window. Patsie Ryan looked round, and in an instant dropped the hastily bundled-up dress, dived in under a hedge, and ran with great speed across a field towards some hay-ricks further on. Ross snatched up the dress, but hurried on, followed by his wife, till he reached the hay-ricks, when a bundle of rags lying on the ground, and the panting girl cowering fearfully beside it, drew him up with an exclamation of surprise. Mrs Ross, surprised at the change in his manner, crept round the stacks; saw a bleared face and glaring eyes raised from among the hay; and recognised the woman who had killed her child.

The eyes of Peg Ryan lighted on Mrs Ross's face and became fixed there, while her lips and nostrils became slowly dilated with horror. The girl Patsie cowered abjectly, crying—

"Oh, it was for mother! I'll never do the likes again; it was for mother, who is so ill!"

The words were unheeded, and the eyes of the two women appeared to be chained to each other. The miserable wretch on the ground was the first to find her voice.

"This one looks real!" she slowly and fearfully breathed, clutching faintly at the air as if to get at the woman hanging vengefully over her. "I've seen her often since—since then; but it always went away when I got a drop of drink. You've come to kill me at last."

"Yes. Kill! kill! kill!" shouted the frenzied woman she had wronged. "You and yours! it's only a life for a life!"

The sick woman groaned and drew her ragged girl closer to her side.

"I know it! I know it!" she painfully got out. "I killed her—your wee bairn; but I was in drink at the time—mad for

it—and didn't know what I was doing. Kill me now, but don't touch the girl. My life's worth little, but the girl never did you harm."

Mrs Ross shivered, shrank back, and covered her face with her hands.

"I'm dying," hoarsely whispered Peg Ryan, trying feebly to raise herself and crawl towards her enemy as she spoke. "The curse of God has rested on my sowl from the time when ye stood up in Court to bring it down on me. I've been in hell ever since; and my poor Patsie will go the same way—kicked along—starved, beaten, and then hounded to prison. Oh, God! I am well punished."

She sank back helplessly among the loose hay, and almost at the same moment the woman hanging over her started and clutched her husband's arm.

"S—s—sh! What's that? Did you no hear a whisper?" she breathlessly inquired. "It was like oor wee Katie's voice jist afore she dee'd. I'm sure I heard her sayin'—'No pitty woman innny polly offis.'"

"I heard nothing," said the husband, glancing round in alarm.

"My mother! Look at my mother!" cried the beggar girl; "she's falling over, and her face is turning white!"

Mrs Ross bent down on the ground and gently raised the dying woman in her arms. The eyes opened in surprise at the soft tenderness of the touch, and at last with a terrible effort the lips formed the words—

"The girl—have mercy on her—don't hound her to prison."

"I winna! I winna! Katie wadna let me!" murmured the weeping woman. "I couldna grieve my wee angel in heaven by keeping up spite. I'll see that she comes to nae harm."

An incredulous look of surprise broke over the ghastly features of the dying woman; then with a terrible effort she tried to seize the hand of the woman she had wronged, and cover it with kisses, and then, choking and gasping, she got out—

"Forgiveness! Oh, Heaven bless you and yours to all—"

The sentence was never finished. The muscles of her face became contracted, the utterance choked, and with a few faint struggles the wretched being had passed to a higher tribunal.

Next day, on the affair being reported to us, a shell was sent out from the poorhouse, and the burial quietly performed. Mrs Ross was then recommended to transfer the girl Patsie to the care of the parochial authorities; and at first she half

agreed to follow the suggestion ; but day after day passed away, and as Patsie, under a rough and untutored exterior, showed considerable affection and quickness, she was allowed to remain, till at last they resolved to fairly adopt her. Mr Ross is long since dead, and his wife anything but a robust woman ; but though she has no children of her own to depend upon for support, there is a strong, big-armed woman, who acts to her as the most devoted of daughters ; and that woman is Patsie Ryan, the daughter of the child-stripper.

A FRIEND IN NEED.

As months rolled on, and Hugh M'Indoe relentlessly pursued his task, the invisible Ruffian was worked up to a pitch of fury and anxiety much easier to be imagined than described. His anxiety was for his own safety and the ultimate fate of his gang, who were rapidly diminishing before his eyes ; and his fury was against the active hand working out the mischief, the man who had sworn to tear the mask from his face, and land him in prison beside the meanest of his tools. Thieving and murder have ever walked side by side ; and this masterly scoundrel now resolved to strike at the reformed thief swiftly and surely from behind the darkness that shrouded his own person. While M'Indoe lived, he never could be sure of a moment's liberty, or of success in a single scheme : therefore M'Indoe must die. The reasoning was cool, and the decision diabolical, but the difficulty was to get any one to undertake the task. By this time a halo of romance and dread surrounded M'Indoe ; he was believed to be something uncanny, and there was not a professional thief in Edinburgh who would not whiten and start at the mere mention of his name.

After much scheming and planning, The Ruffian had at last to fix on two comparatively fresh hands, named Curdie and Hollows, who knew little about Edinburgh, and less about M'Indoe, but who had learnt to hate him by narrowly escaping capture through his means. These two readily undertook to force M'Indoe into a dreadful oath to molest the fraternity no longer, or, in event of his refusing, to stop his activity for ever. It seems strange that two men should coolly form such a compact. One would think that a mere word would have set the matter in its true light before them—to commit murder is to be found out and hanged, we might say ; but such a statement would only cause a confirmed criminal to smile. You might as well say, “ Steal a watch, and you will be captured and imprisoned ; ” for the same fatality of reasoning would prompt him to say, with perhaps a sceptical grin, “ May be.”

While this plot was forming, Nosie Mincher, as I have shown, was keenly on the watch ; but being now outside of the profession, he could get at the truth only in vague hints. Enough was revealed, however, to thoroughly alarm him for the safety of his only friend ; and one day he presented himself before M'Indoe with a face glowing with importance, and holding something mysteriously in his hand behind his back.

"I know they're up to some mischief," he said one night, as he had often done of late, "'cos I've pumped as much out of my sister Poll ; and I've been up to the Office and seen M'Govan, and though he laughed at me for axin' it, he gave it me all the same."

"Gave you what?" asked M'Indoe, wearily and indifferently.

"Something that'll maybe serve you a good turn, if it so happens that they try on any of their games. Look!" and he held up a fireman's whistle, a formidable brass affair, which, sounded in the noisiest street, could be heard a quarter of a mile off. "Sound that if ever you're pounced on, and you'll see me on the spot at your side in two jiffies. Me and M'Govan arranged it so."

M'Indoe took the whistle, with a faint smile at the warmth and enthusiasm of his apprentice.

"And don't go out at night much—at least no more than you can help," eagerly continued Nosie, with a world of anxiety in his face ; "'cos you know I can't be always watching ye ; and, when you're wandering about in the dark, thinkin' on nothin', and looking up at the stars and talkin' to yourself, as I often see you do, they might come behind and give ye one afore ye know'd where ye was. Mind, The Ruffian's fly, and when he strikes, ye'll never know till it's all over, and then it'll do ye no good, 'cos you'll be dead ;" and tears of concern stood thick in Nosie's eyes as he got out the impulsive burst of words, more than he had ever before had courage to address to his strange benefactor.

"I think you're wrong, Nosie ; my life is not worth taking," sadly returned M'Indoe ; and in this abrupt way the conversation ended, though it gave Nosie some satisfaction and relief to observe that the fireman's whistle which he had begged so anxiously from me up at the Office was slipped into M'Indoe's pocket before he went out for his usual stroll.

But Nosie's anxiety was not relieved, or his vigilance relaxed. All that night, till after eleven o'clock, he persistently flitted

along in M'Indoe's wake, thinking his presence unknown and unobserved, till suddenly M'Indoe turned, and, before his self-appointed guardian could get out of the way, abruptly said with a faint smile—

“Go home, Nosie ; I'll follow in an hour.”

“Yes, sir,” humbly and obediently answered Nosie, blushing to the ears at being detected ; and then, as he slunk away, he added, “There's something up when Curdie's wife is following him. I wonder if it's mischief, or only another trapping business? Blow me if I like to leave him ! I'll go home, but if he's not back sharp to the minute, I'm out again, and off for M'Govan to help me in the hunt—only see if I'm not !”

This took place at the corner of the Grassmarket, near the well ; and Nosie turned away down towards the Horse Wynd by the Cowgate, while M'Indoe wandered on calm and unconcerned to that lonely and dark road leading round the back of the Castle, where he turned abruptly and suddenly on the woman who had been flitting in his wake.

“I know you, Peg, and I know the man you stick to,” he said sharply. “You've followed me to-night like a shadow. What do you want?”

“If you please, I would like to speak to you,” was the slinking reply ; “I was afraid while the boy was hanging about.”

“He is gone—there is no one in sight—and I am listening,” impatiently returned M'Indoe.

“Will you swear to be secret?”

“No.

The abrupt answer did not disconcert her in the least.

“Then I must trust you without it,” she said, conclusively.

“Please yourself. Out with your message, whatever it is, or I'm off at once.”

“Well, it is my husband—I want you to save him.”

“Save him—how? What is wrong?”

“Everything is wrong,” cried the woman, with a well-counterfeited look of distress. “He has quarrelled with The Ruffian, and got hurt. But that would be nothing, only he has found out who The Ruffian is, and is dead on for peaching the moment he is free.”

“Free? Is he in jail?”

“No, but kept prisoner till he will swear an awful oath not to peach.”

“Well, what is all that to me?” coolly remarked M'Indoe, after a pause, vainly trying to conceal his interest and excitement.

"Nothing, of course," readily answered the woman, with assumed indifference. "Only I've heard that you are anxious to discover who The Ruffian is, and that you were always ready to help those who were after the honest dodge."

"And you are?" sneered M'Indoe.

"Certainly we are," emphatically returned the woman. "Only let us get over this business, and you'll not see us among them again."

"That's a lie; but it doesn't matter," wearily replied M'Indoe. "Are you sure he really knows who The Ruffian is?"

"Certain. Why else should The Ruffian shut him up?" was the cunning rejoinder.

"Do *you* know who he is?"

"No, I don't know, and I don't want to know," whispered the woman, with a real shudder.

"Then, I'll tell you what to do," said M'Indoe, still suspicious, and watching her keenly. "Go up to the Office, and get M'Govan and some of the spots to help you to set him free."

"How can I do that before I know where he is confined?" replied the woman, simulating tears as she spoke. "It is your assistance I want in the first place to find him out and set him free; *then* it will be time enough to set them after The Ruffian."

"Ah, I see," replied M'Indoe, with a grim smile. "You want share of the reward which is likely to come for The Ruffian's capture. Woman, do you think that I would touch a coin of the cursed money?"

"I don't know," was Peg's hesitating reply, as she jumped at his mistake, inwardly gloating over the fact that she had at last deceived him. "But you know every hide and corner in the land: only show me where he is hid, and afterwards you may do as you please about the reward."

There was a long pause. M'Indoe was weighing the thing deliberately in his mind: on the one hand, the possible treachery and harm that he had been repeatedly warned against; and on the other, the chance—the long-looked-for dream of his life—to lay his enemy by the heels in prison. Had a hundred other baits been offered, M'Indoe would have rejected them all; but this? It was too tempting, and he hesitated.

"You are surely not afraid?" said the woman, noticing his hesitation.

"Afraid?" he echoed with a bitter laugh; "I fear nothing now—not even *death*!"

The woman shuddered and paled.

"Don't speak of that," she said; "it makes me shiver all over. Come, if you mean to help us."

"I mean to help myself," sharply replied M'Indoe. "Understand that distinctly before I move a step on the way. The moment I am done with The Ruffian, keep out of my way if you would be safe, for I will hunt you both down as remorselessly as if you were my bitterest enemies. Shall I come?"

It was the woman's turn to hesitate now. For the first time she had a glimpse into the inflexible determination of his character, and was convinced that their plot to force him into an oath would be a waste of time and breath; and the alternative she knew would be death—murder, in which her own husband would bear an active hand. She thought and trembled till her head had sunk on her hands, and she was shaking from head to foot like a condemned criminal. She grew calmer after a moment, seeing that the man of iron only strode up and down waiting her decision, and then said—

"You may come. God knows, I wish it was over!"

She was off with flying strides through the quiet moonlit streets, never again looking him in the face, or seeming to care whether he followed or lingered, till they reached the head of Leith Wynd, when M'Indoe said—

"Is it about the top of the land that he is confined?"

"I think so; but Polly Mincher knows best," was the evasive reply. "We're to go up to her to find out."

M'Indoe hesitated, not from fear, but a vague feeling of uneasiness which he could not effectually shake off; but the woman, striding on without once looking back, led him on in spite of himself. He followed her swift footsteps up the well-known stairs to the very top of the land where, after threading blindly a long passage, she opened the door of a garret and invited him to follow.

It was perfectly dark within, and silent as the grave; but all his hesitation was gone now, and he stepped into the trap, and without the slightest alarm heard her fasten the door behind him.

"Stoop, Hughie, stoop," whispered the she-traitor, with a tremor in her voice which at once roused his suspicions; but before he could obey there was a rush from either side of the dark room, and he was carried over, fighting and struggling in the grasp of Curdie and Hollows. The fight was a long and determined one, for M'Indoe was still a man of wonderful

strength, and the struggle might not have ended so decidedly in favour of the ruffians had not Peg herself suddenly put in a hand by throttling M'Indoe nearly black in the face. Then the men took breath and bound him fast hand and foot, struck a light, and had a look at each other. M'Indoe was torn, bleeding, and pale, but, to their amazement, cool and smiling. Curdie was bleeding profusely from the nose, and Hollows was groaning aloud while he submitted to have a sprained wrist bound up with a rag by the attentive Peg. After a moment's breathing, the two lifted M'Indoe and carried him into the next room, in which Polly Mincher sat, pale and trembling, and coolly dropped him on the floor, while they provided themselves with formidable weapons in the shape of a neddy and a sand-bag.

"Trapped clean, Mister M'Indoe!" said Curdie, as they thus threateningly approached him. "What do you think of your position now?"

M'Indoe laughed softly to himself; and, to their intense discomfiture, they could see that the merriment was real, not affected.

"I hope the idea doesn't for a moment enter your foggy brains that I am frightened?" he coolly remarked at last.

"It doesn't matter to us whether ye're frightened or not," blurted out Curdie, who was the first to find tongue. "We only wants to have a little talk wi' ye on a subject of great importance."

"Very great importance," emphatically added Hollows, "seeing that your life depends on it."

"Yes," continued Curdie, imposing silence with a rap on the table with his neddy; "you've hunted down a lot of honest prigs. Don't interrupt now; it's no matter what's become of them so as they're lost to The Ruffian."

"Then *he* has set you on to this?" acutely remarked M'Indoe.

The two thieves stared at each other.

"Sharp, ain't he, Curdie?" said Hollows, with a grin.

"As a razor," was the emphatic rejoinder. Then, turning to M'Indoe, Curdie added, "Look here; I owes ye a grudge myself for nearly getting me into quod; but we're willing to look over that—"

"Yes, we'll look over that," obligingly added Hollows.

"And a lot more as well, if you're willin' to pay for your worthless life," continued Curdie. Then, more harshly, he

added, "You're to hunt down no more—not one! You'll swear that on your bended knees in the words that Polly Mincher shall read to you, or you never gets out of here alive."

"Yes," ferociously added Hollows, with a groan over his sprained wrist. "We cast lots for the job, who should do it; and even if we're caught and scragged, you'll be dead all the same, and won't trouble the others. So save your skin and swear."

"Swear?" echoed M'Indoe, with a hearty laugh that astonished them. "Then hear me. I swear to hunt you both down the moment my limbs are free. You are a pair of wild beasts, dangerous to every one. It is not a simple detective that you have raised your hands against, but me!—a thief—Hugh M'Indoe! Consider yourselves juggled within the week."

The two ruffians stood transfixed, whitened to the lips with rage and astonishment. Thick-skinned though they were, every word slashed them to the heart's core; and when at last Curdie found voice it was in a hoarse yell, and accompanied by a crash of the neddy on the table that made every one but M'Indoe jump.

"Swear it, or croak!" he burst forth, approaching M'Indoe, with the neddy dangling loosely and threateningly in his hand.

The women screamed and averted their eyes; and then Hollows, himself shaking with excitement, said hurriedly—

"Turn out the women! We must *force* him to swear; we must put him to the test."

"Ah, yes; I had forgot about that," responded Curdie, with a gloating look. "We're going to torture ye—mind, torture!" and he tauntingly thrust his ugly face down close to M'Indoe's nose, and the next moment went staggering backwards with his eyes and forehead nearly driven in by a terrific blow from the hard top of M'Indoe's head. "Murder! murder!" he yelled. "Curse you! You'll suffer for that!" and, springing forward, he threw the neddy back over his shoulder to bring it down with all his strength on the head of their prisoner; when with a scream and a rush Polly Mincher flew forward, tugged the weapon from his hand, and got between him and M'Indoe.

"Don't kill him—don't!—he'll swear," she pleadingly gasped, with white cheeks and eyes shining with excitement; then she hurriedly whispered in M'Indoe's ear, "Swear anything they ask, even though you have to break it after. Swear, or there'll be murder done!"

"I have already sworn to hunt you all down!" cried M'Indoe, with flashing eyes and undaunted mien. "And I shall keep my oath—oh, so solemnly! Kill me if you like; but if you do you'll not be six hours out of prison. What are your threats, and blows, and neddies to me? I'm a thief like yourselves, but I'm not to be frightened by death itself!"

There was a dead silence after these words. The two women shrank weeping away, and the men stood for a moment paralysed by fear or astonishment. The next instant, with a sudden wrench, M'Indoe got his arms free, his hand in his pocket, and had the brass whistle almost at his mouth, when, with a shout, the two ruffians sprang forward, and, after a desperate fight, tore it from his grasp, and again pinned his arms to his side.

"No, you don't!" breathlessly hissed Curdie, once more snatching up the neddy and tossing the whistle to the other end of the room. "Swear, or you're gone."

There was no reply in words; but M'Indoe's eyes flashed the same defiance and contempt which he had all along exhibited. But just as the savage weapon was about to descend on his head, a thundering knock at the outer door made every one in the room spring up in alarm.

"Who can it be?" whispered Curdie. "Stow him into the closet, and then you, Peg, go and see who's there."

There was no time to rebind the arms of the prisoner. Hollows seized him by the collar and dragged him into an adjoining closet, and at the same moment Polly Mincher, while pretending to assist, managed to whisper into M'Indoe's ear—

"The hide in the floor; they don't know of it. Get in, and remain there till I tell you to come out. You've been kind to poor Nosie; I can't see you killed."

There was no chance of a reply, even by a look, for the next instant M'Indoe was tossed into the closet, and the door locked on the outside. Then after repeated whispering and consultation, the outer door was opened, and the new-comer—one of the gang—admitted. The stay of the new arrival was a short one, for, after much whispering, he was commissioned to conduct the two women to another part of the building; and then the two ruffians drew in their chairs to the table, and very deliberately played six games at "twenty-fives" to settle who was to be M'Indoe's murderer. The lot fell upon Curdie, and he sprang to his feet with a whoop and a flourish that told not of fear, but real ferocious joy.

"Come and see me do it!" he cried to Hollows, who was rather chicken-hearted for such work.

"Must it be done?" hesitatingly inquired the other. "Let's give him one more chance to swear."

"Very well," growled the other, tenderly feeling his swelled and discoloured face. "It's more than he deserves, though curse me if I'll let him off without a hiding!"

They unlocked the closet door, threw it open, and peered in together. At the first glance they thought that their eyes had deceived them by coming suddenly from the glare of light to comparative darkness; but at the second look round on the bare walls and rubbish-littered floor they uttered a simultaneous howl of astonishment which might have lifted the roof off.

"The d—l! he's gone!" shouted Hollows.

"Impossible! How could he give us the slip?" gasped Curdie, staggering forward and peering into every corner in vain. "Good God! I never saw anything like that. He could not have come out by the door, for it was locked on the outside, and my eye never off it, and no human being could crush himself through that small window on to the roof. Curses on it, we're done!"

"Yes, and if he's really off, the spots 'ill be down on us like winking," responded Hollows, with a groan. "We're booked for a tenner."

Hurriedly they turned over everything that littered the floor, closely examined the bare walls, and then turned to the small window on the roof. It seemed utterly impossible that any man could even reach it unaided; but, still unsatisfied, they brought in a chair, smashed the frame of the window outwards, and then Hollows tried to wriggle himself through. But though he was of a considerably more slender build than M'Indoe, the attempt was an utter failure, and after nearly jamming himself fast in the aperture, he was at last pulled back by the heels, and landed breathless, torn, and infuriated on the floor by Curdie. Then the two staggered back against opposite walls of the closet, and stared in blank amazement into each other's faces.

"The man's a devil! I've often heard it, and laughed at it, but I believe it now!" cried Curdie, wiping the clammy sweat from his brow. "What's to be done?"

"I say a bolt as fast as we can spin," was the quick reply. "It's our only chance."

"A bolt from M'Indoe! what's the use of trying it?" de-

spairingly returned Curdie, with every spark of his bullying courage gone. "You might as well try to run from your own shadow. You heard his own words, 'Consider yourselves juggled within the week.' He laughed, too, when he said it—laughed though his life was a mere toss-up—so he must have been sure of it. I tell you the man's a devil, and we may as well sit still and be nabbed easy."

"Well, stay and be nabbed, then, if you're so fond of it," snarled Hollows, starting up. "I'm off for Newcastle. There's a boat from Leith at six o'clock, and it'll not be far from that by the time I get there. Once in Newcastle, we could cut along to Sunderland or Hartlepool, and across Yorkshire, and defy the very devil himself to pick us up. What do you say?"

"I am ready and willing to try it," was the despairing reply; "but it'll be all in vain—we'll be juggled within the week."

Their luggage was neither extensive nor difficult to pack; and presently the light was put out, the door locked, and the place left to darkness and silence. The heavy footsteps of the ruffians descended to the flat below, where a pause and a whisper brought out Peg to join them, and then the three flitted away like dark shadows towards Leith, leaving poor Polly Mincher trembling in her room, and uncertain whether there had been a murder or a narrow escape, and actually too overpowered with terror to be able to move and ascertain.

Meanwhile, M'Indoe waited long and patiently for her to appear and assure him that the way was clear. The hide below the floor of the closet was neither roomy nor airy; but, by slightly raising the two deals which had given him admittance, he just managed to breathe and no more. Had his own life been his only concern, he would certainly have moved at once, and at all risks have attempted to get out of the building; but the whole adventure had acted only as a whet to his consuming desire for vengeance on the man who had wrought it all out, as well as on the tools he had used; and, like the cat which, when sure of its prey, actually plays with it, he took a savage delight in thinking that the escaping criminals were as safe as if already in prison.

"The boat to Newcastle," he muttered to himself, thinking of the plans they had laid down directly over his hiding-place. "Ha, ha! I wish them a pleasant voyage. They forgot that the telegraph, and even the railway, travels quicker than a steamer. Patience! there is abundance of time!"

But grey dawn began to creep over the sky, and he was still unrelieved. The cramped position in the hide had long since become intolerable, and he had got out of it and into the adjoining room only to find the door securely locked, and not an article within reach capable of prizing it open or removing the lock bodily. At last, in groping searchingly over the floor, his hand touched a bit of round cold metal, and with an exclamation of joy he recognised Nosie's brass whistle! He was now reckless and desperate with the thought that the scoundrels who had so narrowly escaped murder might after all escape capture, and without a moment's hesitation he raised the whistle to his lips and sent forth several shrill "birrs" almost loud enough to raise the dead.

By this time Nosie had become alarmed at his master's long and unaccountable absence, and, utterly unable to sleep, had wandered out into the streets on the hunt.

An hour spent fruitlessly in this way only increased his grief and alarm, and finding himself in the neighbourhood of my house, he at last took courage to come up and rouse me out of bed to listen to his story. I made light of his anxiety, assuring him that such an absence was not uncommon with his eccentric benefactor. But no words of mine could soothe him or convince him that M'Indoe was not in danger, and in sheer pity for the lad I at last put on my things and started with him in search of M'Indoe.

Now, when M'Indoe sent forth the scream of the fireman's whistle from the top of the Happy Land, we were standing very tired and footsore, not in Leith Wynd, but near the head of the close adjoining, and, recognising the shrill "birr," I started and said to Nosie—

"I hear the fire whistle. I'll have to leave you, Nosie, and see what's wrong."

But Nosie was only perking his head on one side to listen for the repetition of the signal, with his whole face lighted up, and his breath coming quick and fast with intense excitement.

Birr—birr! went the whistle again, and then with a joyful shout Nosie started round, seized me by the arm, and began running up the Canongate and down Leith Wynd, dragging me along with him.

"Oh, sir! I'll swear it's no fire!" he cried. "It's M'Indoe's whistle, and that's the signal we agreed on—three times sounded and then a pause. Oh, Jamie, run, if ever ye runned in yer life! He's in great trouble, or he'd never sound it; and

you know Peg was a-followin' him when I last saw him. We oughter ha' come here first!"

Following the direction of the sound, we very swiftly ascended the worn stairs, and discovered M'Indoe's place of confinement. After some difficulty and delay, Nosie procured a sledge-hammer, and with a wonderful strength himself smashed in the door, and then actually took the stern, grey-haired man in his arms, and hugged him and kissed him, and danced about him like one possessed. In half-an-hour a strong *posse* of policemen came down from the Office, and we hunted out every suspicious character in the land, handcuffed them all, and sent them up to the Office, each between two policemen. Very reluctantly, indeed, I was compelled to include in the batch poor Polly Mincher, notwithstanding M'Indoe's detailed account of the good turn she had served him. My next business was to telegraph to the police at Newcastle, giving a description of the three criminals, in case the steamer should arrive before me. Then I ran home for a mouthful of breakfast, changed my clothes, got down to the railway in company with M'Indoe, and took through tickets for Newcastle. Two hours and a-half after our arrival in the town the steamer hove in sight, and was immediately signalled to back for a little, to allow a boat to put off from the pier and board her before touching. Four policemen took their places beside us, we were rowed out alongside, and almost the first face we noticed among the wondering crowd of passengers peering eagerly over the taffrail was that of Curdie, who, in reply to my cheerful nod, and M'Indoe's deadly smile, only turned to Hollows and resignedly muttered—

"I told you so—jugged within the week!"

Hollows, however, took a different view of the matter, and, after a desperate struggle with the police, in which he was rather severely handled, tried to brazen it out by demanding "what he had done?"

"Polly Mincher will tell you that when she appears against you at the trial," I coolly replied, and the answer appeared actually to take his breath away, for not another word did he say.

"But Polly's a known thief," fiercely interposed Peg. "Her word won't be taken as evidence."

I made no reply; but the words set me a-thinking. By the time I got back to Edinburgh, I had become convinced that we had no good case against them. For days I bothered my

brains on the subject, loth to let them slip from our fingers ; and at last, to my infinite relief, some one ferreted out another case against all three, which brought the two men, as Hollows had predicted, in for ten years a-piece, while Peg got off cheaply with nine months' imprisonment.

Poor Polly was released, and sent at her own request out to the Magdalen Refuge, whence she was afterwards taken into service. I will have to allude to her again, by and by, not only because the circumstances of the case are interesting, but to show truthfully how terribly hard at times is the fight of a reformed criminal after honesty and well-doing.

A ROMANCE OF THE NORTH BRIDGE.

IN the commonest realities of life there is a mine of romance if the attentive observer only set himself to draw it out. Writers of stories seem to ignore this fact, and too often keep drawing upon their own imagination for the most extravagant sensations, while a whole world of heart-stirring realities lies at their very elbows untouched. I daresay there is not a stone in some of the older quarters of this wonderful city but is encrusted with a romance of some kind. Most of them are forgotten, crumbling into oblivion with the stones themselves. But be mine the task to give here one of those real romances in connection with the North Bridge.

The whole of the Bridge, with the exception of one solitary spot down near the New Buildings, lay crusted with hoar frost, which made every cranny and jutting parapet gleam white and sparkling in the clear moonlight. The time was the beginning of December; and, though no snow had fallen, the air was keen and wintry as it went sweeping up the Bridge towards the High Street, making the solitary figure which it sported past cower and huddle before its icy gusts. The moon was high in the heavens, and every star flashing in a perfectly cloudless sky, thus lighting clearly the long dark row of buildings composing the High Street and Canongate, and even showing behind that every crevice and cranny of Arthur's Seat, and the surrounding hills melting away towards the sea.

The one spot which was not white with glittering hoar frost was an enclosure near the foot of the stone parapet where the causeway had been broken up and guarded by heavy wooden tressels, bearing the words, "Street under Repair." Red danger lamps were fastened at either end of the enclosure, a moveable tool-house stood in the middle, and in front of this tool-house a blazing fire threw a red glow across the scene. Close to this fire, shielded and almost tented by a huge tarpaulin or waggon-cover, sat an old watchman, Teddy Murphy by name. Teddy was old, and rather rheumatic, and quite unfit for any

occupation requiring great activity, and he had a weakness for boasting that he had "been on the Paving Board" for seven and a-half years without once disgracing himself; but under his rough and grumpy exterior there throbbed as warm and feeling a heart as it would be possible to find in the whole range of humanity.

Teddy was alone, as I have said, methodically filling his little black cutty, and occasionally cowering, when the draught mischievously crept round the tarpaulin and up his trouser-legs. The whole Bridge from end to end did not show another moving thing except the long line of blinking street lamps, whose yellow light contrasted strangely with the clear moonlight flooding down from above and the white frost gleaming and sparkling below.

"God pity and help the poor in this cowl'd weather," muttered Teddy sententiously to himself, as he stooped to fasten some bits of twine round his trouser-legs to keep the wind out. "There's not a few would give something for the sight of a fire like that this night. Whisht, now! That's not the wind, surely?"

A shivering cry, badly repressed, came wafting along with the wind; and, turning slightly in his tarpaulin and listening intently, Teddy could just detect a kind of ghostly patter of feet coming in his direction. A moment more and the cause appeared in sight: a very slim boy of ten, who was tottering along the pavement keeping his hands in his pockets, and as stiff a back against the wind bowling him along as was possible under the circumstances. A few yards past the glowing fire the thin waif stopped, tugged on his scrap of a cap, and eyed the crackling blaze longingly. Then a cloud settled on his face, and with a sigh and a shiver he was about to pass on when old Teddy spoke out—

"Come forrid, my wee man, an' warm yer toes. Shure ye're as welcome as at yer own fireside."

The thin shadow slowly and hesitatingly accepted the invitation. Forward in the red glow of the fire, he showed himself to be clad in a pair of very short and thin trousers, and a jacket buttoned up to the throat in a suspicious way that it made it doubtful if either waistcoat or shirt were beneath. The face was not a bad one, though gaunt with cold and hunger, and the eyes were quick and shiny with intelligence. The hands were frozen blue, but they slowly thawed before the red fire. The shiny eyes watched the process steadily, and old

Teddy could see that the white face was pursed up with that old, old look that denotes familiarity with poverty, hardship, and perhaps crime.

"That's a fine heat; come closer in to the shelter of the tarpaulin, an' ye'll be out of the wind," said Teddy, wishing to be sociable, and almost feeling as if he were addressing a man older than himself. "The frost's pretty sharp now, isn't it?"

"Sharp? it's awful;" and the boy gave a woeful shudder. "I wish it would kill me, and have done with it."

Teddy gave an uneasy grunt, and raked up his pipe with a long pin taken from the corner of his waistcoat.

"That's not quite right," he gravely replied at last, when his pipe was puffing again, and his thoughts were arranged. "It's wrong to fly agin Providence, ye know. We're all sent here for a purpose."

"Yes, I know that;" and the indifference in the boy's tones almost hid the bitterness of his answer; "some to be starved and hunted down—all for nothing."

"Was you hunted, now?"

"Yes."

"When?"

"The day afore yesterday, by M'Govan. I've been hiding since. I only come out at night, and then everybody's in bed, so I don't get much to eat. But I don't care," and his lip quivered a little as he said it, "it'll be the sooner over."

"What did you do, now?"

"Nothing."

Old Teddy grunted again, even more dissatisfied than before.

"M'Govan wouldn't chase you for *that*," he said at last.

"But he did. Some of the others stole a parcel, and gave it to me to carry. I didn't know 'twas stole; and then we met him, and they bolted, and I dropped the parcel and had such a run for it. He'll take me, first chance, I know."

"Ye're not a thafe, are ye?"

"No, not yet," carelessly answered the boy. "Just thinking of turning one."

Old Teddy's face looked graver than ever, and his pipe took a long time to rake up with the long pin.

"What's yer name?"

"Jackey—Jackey Harrup."

"Well, Jackey, a thafe isn't much in the world. It 'ud be better that the frost should get at ye and nip ye dead afore ye turn *that*."

The words were plain enough, but the tone was one of deep feeling, and the boy winced perceptibly.

"It ain't any use fightin'," he answered bitterly. "There's too many thieves about, and ye get caught all the same whether ye're one or not. There isn't much difference, is there, between being a prig and being thought one?"

"Well—no, there isn't," slowly answered old Teddy, to whose simple mind this sudden question was rather a poser, "except, of course, that ye aren't one."

"Well, that don't make much difference when you're hungry," persisted the boy. "I see lots of them, boys that prig a little, and I never see them hungry."

Teddy made no reply, but scratched his head long and thoughtfully. At last he put his hand into his coat-pocket, which bulged out a good deal under the tarpaulin, and produced a large raw potatoe, which he simply handed to the boy.

"Roast it," he said, "down among them ashes under the grate. "Go on; I've lots more," and he brought them out one by one and piled them on the ground at Jackey's hand, much as artillerymen pile cannon-balls. "I do it every night; they cook beautiful in about two minutes."

Jackey hesitated, and his eye, formerly shining with defiance, glistened a little.

"It's your own supper you're giving me," he said, rather huskily; "I know it's your supper, and—"

"And you're going to ate them," said Teddy, quite unmoved. "Go on; if I was starvin' myself I wouldn't give them away—leastaways, I don't think so. I've been on the Paving Board this seven years an' a-half; an' though I'm gettin' rather stiff and 'old for them, and my wages isn't great, I daresay I'll always have my bite an' my sup, plase the Lord."

Jackey said no more, but squatted down on his knees and began toasting the potatoes under the red fire, at the same time toasting his own face till it glowed again. When the first one was cooked through, and the cracked skin showed a steaming hot, meally core, crying aloud to be eaten, old Teddy quietly produced a bit of paper containing a scrap of dripping, and then Jackey was initiated into the mystery of peeling, dressing, and eating the roasted floury balls, which he thought then and after was the sweetest meal he had ever tasted. When this lively business was nearly completed, and the pile of cannon-balls sensibly reduced—Teddy looking on with as much pleasure as

if he had actually been eating them himself—Jackey looked up in the old watchman's face and said, with a sudden impulse—

"You're awful good and kind!" and it was clear, from the brightness of his whole face, that, had the potatoes been real cannon-balls, Jackey would readily have expended every one of them in defence of old Teddy.

The old watchman nodded gravely, took a long pull at his pipe, and then, after making a cosy corner in the tarpaulin for Jackey, he softly inquired—

"Where's your father, Jackey?"

"He was transported. That's long ago; I don't mind of *him*," said the boy.

"And yer mother?" softly pursued the old man.

"She was starved two years ago. I don't remember it much now, there's been so many cold shivering days since then, except when I look into a red fire like that, and then I seem to see it all over again. She didn't get much work to do, and we were put out of our house for not paying the rent. She went about for a while, and we slept in stairs at night. She never begged any, but sometimes people gave us something to eat, and then she always gave me the biggest share. I was awful hungry all the time. One night we went into a stair, and I cried because I couldn't have anything to eat; but she was afraid the folk in the stair would hear us, and she wrapped me close in her shawl and said, 'Wait till to-morrow.' In the morning she was awful cold and stiff, and so was I; only I was hungry, and had my eyes open, while she slept on and would not wake. I got frightened, she looked so white, and went out and got a policeman to come and look at her, and then they brought a stretcher and carried her away. She never woke again, for she was starved dead. They buried her next day, and then they had a long quarrel in a fine room about what place I belonged to. It was some place far away; but while they were quarrelling, I slipped away from the passage where I was waiting, and out at the gate. I never went back, but just worked on my own hook ever since."

Jackey glanced up furtively as he finished his story, and saw that old Teddy had brought out an old coloured handkerchief, with which he was dabbling quietly at his eyes.

"It's the cold that does it," he said, with an awfully guilty look. "It brings the water to me eyes. Your mother had a hard time of it, poor cr'atur' An' so they found her in the mornin' all cold and white, keepin' you warm wid the last

breath in her body? Poor colleen! poor lass!" and Teddy had another wipe at his eye with the handkerchief. "Ah, Jackey, ye've a lot to be thankful for, after being saved in such a way."

Jackey put up the sleeve of his jacket and wiped away the first tear that had appeared in his eyes.

"Yes," he said, at last, in a subdued tone, "I wish she had lived; but seeing she's dead, I wish I was dead too."

Teddy thoughtfully re-lighted his pipe, which had gone out, and then said—

"Ah, I thought so too once, when I was young, an' had my two legs broke, and niver a penny or a friend left in the wide world. But I pulled through. It's all in that, Jackey. You keep honest, an' ye'll pull through as well as I did."

"Do you think so?" said Jackey, somewhat more hopefully than he had yet spoken.

"Sartain—sure," emphatically returned the old watchman.

"I think I'll try once more," said Jackey at last, with a long breath and a more resolute pursing of the mouth.

"Do," replied Teddy, with energy; "and if you don't succeed, just come to me and say, 'Teddy Murphy, ye're a lyin' old decaver, and the biggest chate o' the world that ever crawled.'"

The shadows of the odd pair nestling in the tarpaulin grew longer and longer as the moon sank lower and lower; and at last, when grey dawn appeared, Teddy was relieved, and Jackey turned to shake hands with him before parting. But Teddy tendered no hand in response.

"Come here," he said, drawing the boy close for a confidential whisper. "Ye needn't be goin' yet. Come home wid me, and see if the old woman can make ye a shake-down till ye get something to do. It's bad for the likes o' you to be wanderin' the world alone, wid never a wan to say a good word to ye or keep ye straight. Come on, like a man. The breakfast won't be big, but ye're welcome to a share of it;" and taking Jackey by the hand, the old man settled his indecision by leading him off towards his home in the Cowgate.

In a very clean but not very light room they were received by an old woman, who glanced at Jackey rather sharply.

"It's a poor boy that I found nearly dyin' wid cold," said Teddy, rather uneasily. "He'll have share of my breakfast."

"Times is hard, Teddy," said his wife. "There's little enough in the house widout bringin' in another mouth to feed."

"Well, well, that's true," said Teddy, taking off his hat and muffler, and making Jackey comfortable near the spark of a fire; "but he's a motherless laddie, an' we mustn't be hard on him. He'll get something to do in a day or two."

Bravo, old Teddy! Though 'twas but a roasted potato, a kindly word, and an outstretched hand to the shivering waif, the deed shall shine, and shine with resplendent glory, long after the conqueror and slaughterer of nations with all his deeds is forgotten and unknown. There's an encomium coming for such as Teddy, which the other shall miss, from lips which shall speak as never man spake—"Inasmuch as ye did it to one of the least of these My little ones, ye did it unto Me."

But Jackey had not missed the words of demur. He rose with a flushed face, and, removing his little cap, said to the woman—

"No, nium. I sha'n't stay. I'm not hungry now, and I think I'll go away from Edinburgh rather than be thought a prig and caught as one, and I'll travel the world over till I find my father."

"Hould a bit," said Teddy. "There's no hurry. Never shake hands wid the devil till he appears. See, ye can run an errand for me. There's a sixpence; go down and bring me half a pound of bacon—the chapest—and see if ye'll bring the change back correct."

Away ran Jackey, proud of the honour and trust, and in about three minutes he had got the bacon and was returning to the humble home. But a good deal more than three minutes was to elapse before he again entered the house. Just as he crossed the bottom of the Horse Wynd, it happened that I, taking that way as a quick cut to the Office from my own home, sighted him, and recognised the thief, as I thought, of a railway parcel. He seemed to recognise me too, for he dropped the paper and ran. He ran with such desperate speed that he almost deserved to escape; but I got up to him at the foot of the Cowgate, where he had been knocked down in the mud by the sledge-hammer fist of the policeman on the beat.

"Oh, sir, I'm innocent; they only got me to carry the parcel, and I didn't know it was stolen," he piteously cried, turning up his bleeding and mud-covered face to mine; "but let me go back to old Teddy with the bacon and change—oh, let me go back to old Teddy, for he was so good to me, and he'll think I've turned thief and stole the money."

All this was mere declamation to me—that is, knowing only

a few of the facts, I looked for such protestations, and simply heard them and no more. Jackey was lugged up to the Office, bacon and all ; and then old Teddy was communicated with, and requested to appear when Jackey was brought up at the Police Court. Teddy, who had been in great anxiety at the non-appearance of his little foundling—though quite unshaken in faith as to his honesty—obeyed the summons at once, instead of creeping into bed to rest his weary bones ; and it was a good thing for Jackey that he did. The poor boy, innocent though he was, was about to be remitted to a higher court, when old Teddy got up and made an impassioned speech in his defence. I don't think the speech was grammatical, or particularly well composed, but it had a burning eloquence which carried all before it. He told how he had rescued the boy, perishing of cold and hunger on the North Bridge, and asked if it were likely that a real thief would have put himself in such a condition merely to escape prison. He boldly addressed the Bench, and reminded them that the first conviction and imprisonment, even when the sufferer was innocent, was like settling his fate for life ; and concluded by giving a sketch of the boy's history, much as it had been given him by Jackey the night before on the North Bridge. Not one in the Court, I believe, remained unmoved ; and as for myself, I was now heartily sorry that I had met poor Jackey at all that morning, though, as I shall show, the capture and trial were really to prove to Jackey one of the greatest of blessings. There could be but one result to such eloquent pleading—Jackey was discharged ; and as Teddy agreed to protect and look after him—giving as a voucher of his own respectability the fact that he had been “on the Paving Board” for seven and a-half years—Jackey was permitted to depart in the old man's company. But when they were well clear of the Police Buildings, Jackey stopped short, and putting the bacon and change into Teddy's hands, quietly offered his own to be shaken.

“I'm not going home with you, Teddy,” he said, with great firmness and resolution. “I could not be a burden to you or any one. I'm going off to try and work hard, and p'raps find my father, if he's alive. But I'll come back—oh, yes, mind you, I'll come back, and bring you lots of money and good things. Oh, Teddy, I'll never forget you and your goodness, and your kind words.”

He grasped the old man's hand fervently as he spoke ; and Teddy brought out his coloured handkerchief, not being able

to reply for a moment or two ; and then seeing him resolved, and after exacting a solemn promise from him to keep straight, Teddy pressed all the odd coppers in his possession into Jackey's hands, and thus they parted.

Now, strangely enough, about a year after these events, a letter came to the Office all the way from South Australia, inquiring most anxiously after little Jackey Harrup. It seemed that, after many ups and downs, an Edinburgh newspaper, containing a police report of Jackey's case, had got into the hands of the writer, who designated himself "Mungo Harrup, dealer in hides and tallow, Rundle Street, Adelaide." The writer was, in fact, Jackey's father, who, from working on the road as a common convict, had risen to a position of some importance by his own indomitable energy. He had somehow been led to believe that both Jackey and Jackey's mother had perished, and all his inquiries were now directed towards the son thus unexpectedly restored to him, as it were, from the very grave. This letter, of course, I was at once told to lay before old Teddy ; but when I hunted him out, and read it over to him, he only looked very much distressed, saying—

"What a pity ! what a pity ! Jackey's father found, an' now we dunno where to find Jackey !"

I did not think the obstacle an insurmountable one, and being now a little interested in the case, I tried my best to trace Jackey. But I did not find him ; indeed, if he had been sunk to the centre of the earth, and kept there from the moment he parted from old Teddy, he could not have been more effectually hidden from us. Our answer to our far-distant correspondent was, therefore, anything but a cheering one, although Teddy sat by at the writing of it to scratch his head and dictate all the consolatory passages he could think of. This ended the matter for another year, and then both Teddy and myself were surprised by a visit from Mr Mungo Harrup in person. He was a fine-looking man, and easily recognisable by his resemblance to Jackey. From his own lips I now learned that he had been transported for forgery, and that his sentence was not only well-deserved, but even lenient in the circumstances. He appeared to have plenty of money, and to be no niggard in expending it. But it was all of no avail in the tracing of Jackey ; and he finally left for London, after telling Teddy that he could always hear of him by advertising in the *Times*.

The third year from the disappearance of Jackey was almost gone, when Teddy was suddenly compelled to "retire from the

Paving Board"—in a word, to give up his place to another, by an obstinate attack of rheumatism, which fairly "took the legs from under him," as he expressed it. For a time the change did not bring much privation with it, for his wife, being a woman of some energy, hired a "cuddie" and a little cart, with which she went about hawking fish when they were to be had. One day, however, when the streets were like glass, an unfortunate slip and fall broke the old woman's leg, and she was brought home on a chair, with her leg in splints, helpless for many weeks to come. To make matters worse, the borrowed cuddie took ill and died, and Teddy was roundly told to get another or take the consequences. The accumulation of troubles did not quite crush the old man. He managed to get out of bed and hobble about, and, by selling nearly everything in the house, appeased the noisy creditor; and then, with bare walls and an invalid wife to look at, he began to scratch his head and wonder what he was to do next; for, be it remarked, though both were laid up, both could still eat, and both more than ever required some heat to be kept up in their little home. But all Teddy's scratching could show him no way out of the difficulty, but that of applying for assistance to some of his acquaintances, a course which he was too proud-spirited to adopt.

Depressed in spirit, and hardly able to crawl, Teddy dragged himself out of the house one night towards the end of January, and managed to stagger down as far as the railway station. He was leaning on a stick, and could hardly put one foot before the other without a groan, yet he had got the idea into his head that he could perhaps carry a trunk or a carpet-bag for some passenger, and so earn a sixpence or a shilling to get a bit of fire to warm their dark home. There, amid the glare of lamps and scurry of passengers just emptied from an English train, Teddy chanced to catch sight of a face that seemed to him wonderfully like that of Jackey Harrup, only it was plump and ruddy; and the owner, far from being in rags, wore a smart page's livery.

Teddy forgot all about his own distress in the excitement of the moment, and watched the lad with widely opened eyes as he saw him pile a cab with luggage, give a direction to the cabman, and then walk out of the station at a leisurely pace towards the Old Town.

"Lor! if that should be Jackey, I could tell him about his father," said Teddy to himself, as he hobbled out after him.

"But I might be mistaken ; so I'll have another look at him, if I can only make up to him—only he does walk so fast—oh, my poor legs !"

Groaning and staggering, Teddy managed to follow the smart page as far as the High Street, and there had nearly lost sight of him, when the lad gave him a chance by turning into a draper's shop. Teddy reached the shop door and peered cautiously in. The page was looking at some warm woollen shawls, and selecting one with particularly bright colours from among the heap, saying aloud, as he did so—

"Put that one up, and I'll take it with me. It's for an old woman, but I've forgotten the address, though I could walk to it blindfolded."

Teddy knew it was Jackey now ; but a sudden thought had come into his head, which effectually scared him from addressing him.

"I dursn't ! it's not for the likes of me to spake to him now. He's a grand gentleman, wid fine clothes on ; and all my dacent things is in the pop," said poor Teddy, in a husky voice, as he looked down on his own shabby clothes with the tears creeping into his eyes. "Yet, if I could get him in a dark corner, where he wouldn't be ashamed to be seen spakin' to me, I'd like to tell him about his father."

He shrank back as Jackey came out bearing a brown paper parcel under his arm, and then slowly hobbled after him as before. Jackey's next stoppage was at a grocer's, where he ordered a bottle of whisky and some other odds and ends.

"Be sure you give me Irish whisky," Teddy heard him say, "and the very best you have ; for the old man that it's for is a judge. Put them up, and I'll take them with me."

Jackey came out more heavily laden than ever, and, boldly crossing the street, went straight down Blair Street towards the Cowgate. Teddy hobbled after him, with a strange heaving now thrilling through his heart that almost took his breath away. Jackey went straight on till he came to Teddy's own stair, where he stopped short and looked up towards the unlighted window of the desolate home. The pause gave Teddy time to reach his side, when he laid a hand on his arm and said, doffing his hat as he spoke—

"Jackey, my wee man, is that you ?"

Jackey started round with a joyful cry, dropped the parcels on the frozen street, and threw his arms right round the old man, and hugged him tight.

"Good old Teddy! dear old Teddy! Oh, I'm so glad to see you," he joyously exclaimed, at last picking up the parcels. "I've just arrived in Edinburgh, and master gave me leave to come to you first thing. Ah, Teddy, I've never forgot you all the time, and your kind words have been the making of me."

They went up the stair together, and in about ten minutes the window which had been darkened so long gave out a ruddy glow of candle and blazing fire that might have been seen from Inchkeith. There was such feasting and rejoicing and merriment; and then when Teddy told Jackey all about his father, there was another hugging match which made the old man cry "Oh, my poor legs!" with a smile on his lips, and a look of anguish on his face. Teddy did not know what the *Times* meant; he had never seen the paper about Edinburgh at any rate; but Jackey only smiled, and said he knew all about it, and would send off the advertisement that very night.

The letter was duly sent off, and in a week the answer came from a place in Whitechapel, where Jackey's father had established a tannery. Jackey's father followed the telegram by the next express, and he and Jackey departed together. But old Teddy was not forgotten. The work up at Whitechapel employs a number of hands, and these hands require looking after by a gatekeeper and timemarker. Teddy does that, and has a house near the work all to himself and his wife; and he discharges his trust with the same unswerving faithfulness which characterised him while he was "seven years and a-half on the Paving Board." Jackey is foreman, and he often looks in upon Teddy at night to drink a cup of tea, and sometimes to recall a romance of the North Bridge.

THE RUFFIAN AT BAY

EVERY one of the doubtful characters captured on the morning of M'Indoe's rescue and release was detained on suspicion, until we had either hunted up some charge, or made them glad to fly the city. The result was a state of comparative peace to us, and, of course, ruin to the invisible leader The Ruffian. Who this man was, where he lived, or what were his antecedents, I candidly confess that, up to that time, I had not the faintest idea. Every inquiry, every plot or scheme to ferret out the truth, fell to the ground, from the simple fact that he, with a masterly power, rigidly retained the secret in his own keeping. We could only strike at him blindly by scattering his gang in the manner I have indicated, fervently hoping that he also would take fright, and rid us of his dreaded presence. But before this was well completed we came upon the first tangible clue to his identity, and that, singularly enough, through none other than Simon Penbank.

This miserable spy, who was a coward to his very heart's core, had been threatened among the others, and told direct by one of the gang that The Ruffian meant to "mark him" in a way that would make him remember till his dying day what it was to betray. More: he had actually been attacked by two men when strolling homewards down Blackfriars' Wynd early one morning, and only saved himself by uttering a series of appalling yells for the police, which were heard away up at the High Street, and which brought down a number of the night force so quickly that the assailants took to their heels in an instant. The strange circumstance cut Penbank to the heart. In his peculiar style of reasoning he had been guilty of no wrong. He considered himself a highly aggrieved and persecuted man, and, with a terrible fear at his heart, at once decided that his only security lay in the capture and conviction of The Ruffian.

I have already alluded to a rumour which set down The Ruffian as a young man and a Jew, and of this story, of course,

Penbank was perfectly cognizant. Now, for some years there had been in St Mary's Wynd a small picture shop, chiefly stocked with wretched German copies of our standard English engravings, with halo-covered saints and gold-spangled cardinals and popes, which would not have appeared out of place in the locality had the man who kept the shop seemed anxious for business. But this was not the case, for the shop, bearing above it the name "Isaac Schultze," was as often closed as open. Still, the place was utterly above suspicion on our part; no thieves or suspicious characters were ever seen about it, no goods of doubtful ownership were trafficked in, and even the customary Jewish announcement, "Gold and silver bought," was omitted. Yet it was on this shop and its black-eyed and grey-skinned owner that the suspicions of Simon Penbank suddenly lighted. After the affair at the Lock-up and the reported absence of The Ruffian from the city, it had not escaped the eye of the spy that this picture and frame shop had been closed and shuttered. No sooner was The Ruffian reported once more in our midst than this shop was again opened; and now that the gang had been scattered, it again caught the ferret eye of Penbank that the shutters were up and the place announced "To let."

After turning the circumstance gravely over in his mind for a night, and adding various others which he had hitherto overlooked, this precious rascal took his way out to M'Indoe, as usual brimful of eagerness and information.

"At last!" he cried, "at last I have the information you most eagerly desire; that which you would willingly part with your last penny to possess: I have discovered The Ruffian!"

M'Indoe laughed drily.

"It is no use, Simon Penbank," he sternly returned; "your extortions and impositions have reached their greatest height; you will get no more money out of me; so your ingenuity in inventing the story is all thrown away."

Simon Penbank dropped his shabby hat on the floor, and raised his hands in grief and astonishment.

"What! is it possible?" he exclaimed, with dramatic fervour. "Am I suspected?—I, Simon Penbank, suspected of so base, so mercenary a motive?"

"What other can you have?" sneeringly answered M'Indoe, measuring him from head to foot.

"Behold the shallowness of human reason!" exclaimed the

undaunted spy. "I have another motive, a deeper and more weighty one than all the gold in the universe: my life is in danger!"

"Ha! I am glad to hear that," was M'Indoe's unfeeling rejoinder.

"I knew you would be; I admire your candour; but with me the case is different," serenely returned Penbank. "I love to preserve my life; it is the only possession I value. Honour, truth, justice, friends, and fortune, and even revenge, with me are trifles in comparison. Let them go, but leave me dear life!"

"Selfish to the backbone," said M'Indoe, turning away in disgust. "Go on: who is it that considers your wretched life worth striking at?"

"I have already named the malicious wretch, The Ruffian," responded Penbank, with a melancholy snuffle. "The same who tried to strike at you."

"What! is it possible?" cried M'Indoe, starting back.

"Well may you exclaim 'Is it possible?'" returned Penbank, with an aggrieved look. "I echo the cry, is it possible?—possible that there is such depravity, such injustice, in the world? Injure me? What have I done? Betrayed them? I grant it. What then? 'Choose a friend as you would an orange,' says the modern philosopher, 'by what you can squeeze from him.' My whole life has been but an extension of this generous principle. I make friends and foes alike my oranges; under a judicious squeezing they all in turn minister to my comfort, and yet in return they threaten to kill me! Again, I echo your wondering cry, 'Is it possible!'"

"Poh! Stop that jargon, or reserve it for fools who have more time and patience," impatiently returned M'Indoe. "You don't want money—the most incredible announcement which I ever heard from your lips! What, then, do you come here for?"

"My friend—my more than friend—you shall hear," fervently responded Penbank. "In the present state of affairs it is but a toss up between The Ruffian and myself which is to suffer. Need I say that I prefer that the lot of doom should fall on that unscrupulous scoundrel, that ungrateful rascal, who has become the terror of the community, and the still greater terror of ME? Unlike you, I make no pretensions to bravery; I actually quake when in danger; fear death the moment its sombre shadow darkens my path; in a word, I am a coward.

That I am a selfish one, it has been my constant endeavour to show to all."

"And you wish The Ruffian removed, that your own miserable carcase may be preserved intact?" sneered M'Indoe. "Perhaps you will be good enough to indicate the means to be employed"

"You are the means, my friend," eloquently responded Penbank, with a pointed dab of the tattered gloves at M'Indoe's arm. "I have discovered who The Ruffian is, as I shall at once show you; but to attempt to hunt him down is a task which I am reluctantly compelled to decline. I make no secret of the cause; it is that I am a coward, and not yet tired of life. In the capture of such a daring criminal some one is sure to suffer. That man might be I. Death might result; death to me! Yes; I see the words curling on your lips. It is true it would be no loss to the world, but it would be an important loss to me. But you, my friend, are held back by no such considerations. You are brave to recklessness; while by your own confession life is to you but a useless burden. Behold the opening for your genius; and, believe me, if it should be your fate to perish in the struggle, none shall shed a brighter or more dewy tear over your grave than myself."

"Nothing shall deter me from hunting down The Ruffian," simply returned M'Indoe. "Let me hear all you know."

"Good—good!" replied the pink and paragon of selfishness, brightening up. "That flash of your eye and clenching of the hand mean business; The Ruffian shall be HUNTED DOWN, and I shall once more repose in peace and security;" and he then detailed all he had learned or suspected in connection with Isaac Schultze, of St Mary's Wynd.

"Now, mark my words," continued Penbank, warming on the subject. "The Ruffian is admitted to be a London thief of great dexterity, and will probably now put in a hand himself at the business, seeing that his gang is scattered and himself a fugitive. You have seen Isaac Shultze often, have even spoken to him like myself, little dreaming that his pictures and shop were a mere blind, and that in the hook-nosed hypocrite before you you beheld your bitterest enemy. Take my advice, hand his description to M'Govan—if he has not already jotted it down—for distribution over Scotland; and if The Ruffian be not spotted before a month is gone, look out for him yourself, for he'll turn up again in Edinburgh as sure as fate."

"Right!" echoed M'Indoe, throwing his arm fiercely into

the air, with the old vengeful flash in his eyes. "He'll come back—the moth and the candle; he cannot avoid his fate and my vengeance!"

The result of this interview was a visit to myself from M'Indoe, and though I was both startled by the surmise and inclined to doubt its correctness, I took the precaution to write out a minute description of the suspected Jew, and forward it to the police stations all over the country, with directions to arrest and detain him upon the slightest occasion.

Nothing came of this for some weeks, and I was beginning to despair of ever seeing or hearing more of the man whom we were all dying to lay hands on, when I was one day startled by receiving the following telegram from Glasgow:—

"A man answering your description of Isaac Schultze has been loitering about this city for some time. Suspected as a pickpocket, but so wary that the most incessant watching fails to give us the slightest hold upon him. If you have any case against him, he can be arrested and sent through."

I smiled as I read this bit of news; for, as I have already hinted, the Glasgow force are if anything too sharp, and are thus in danger of overrunning their quarry. The very fact that they were incessantly watching this daring scoundrel was just the thing to make him keep in his horns; and after sending word to them to let him alone, as we had no case against him that could be upheld for a moment, I prayed within myself that some remote chance would drift him back in our direction, where he would believe himself unknown and unsuspected, but where we were even more keenly on the look-out to catch him tripping. If the blind confidence or fatality had been an answer to my fervent wish it could not have come more quickly, as the following telegram, received only two days later, will show:—

"The man supposed to be Isaac Schultze left this morning for Edinburgh by the 9.40 train—supposed to be *en route* for Musselburgh Races. Dressed in Highland cloak of grey tweed, blue spectacles, new tall hat, dark trousers, and good boots; and carries, slung from his shoulder, a tourist's leather bag, new."

This unexpected intelligence electrified me in a moment. There was just time to get hold of two new hands from the police force and turn them into plain clothes, and then plant them down at the station under M'Sweeny's guidance; and as soon as this was done, I had to take my place in a train for Musselburgh, and prepare to receive him, if he should turn up

on the course. To have shown my face plain and undisguised at the station when he arrived, I need scarcely say would instantly have ruined all.

The day was uncommonly dull and cold, even for the fag-end of the year; but, as usual, all was bustle and activity down at the race-course; and a busy time of it we had nipping up the black-legs and thieves, and putting them out of harm's way before they had had time almost to warm to their work. I am accustomed to see these wretches, as well as all loafers and nondescripts, slink out of my way whenever I appear; what was my astonishment, then, before the day was well advanced, in the bustle of an approaching race, to find myself tapped on the arm by one of them—a sham cripple, leaning on a stick and crutch, and having his head done up in bandages, which hid the half of his face—and addressed with the customary whine—

“If you please, good sir, could ye spare a copper to a poor man that's lost the use of his limbs by machinery, as you yourself may do some day—only a copper, please, only a copper!”

I grinned out into a laugh, and laid my hand on his arm, not quite sure, from the crowded state of the cells, whether to take him or not.

“I'm afraid you've made a mistake, my man,” I said; “I think I'll have to take you away and lock you up.”

The moment I uttered the words, the beggar, instead of beginning to whine and protest in the usual fashion, choked, and shook, and laughed to himself, till I thought he would have dropped off his crutches.

“What! do you really not know me, sir?” he asked, in a different tone, which sounded strangely familiar.

I peered keenly into the grimy face and cropped chin with a start of suspicion, but had to give it up and vacantly answer—

“No.”

“Thank Heaven! then there is some chance that The Ruffian himself will not recognise me,” he cried; and by the strange clasping of the hands I now recognised—M'Indoe!

“What! is it actually you?” I cried, in astonishment. “Never let me call myself a detective again. But do you, too, expect The Ruffian?”

“Expect him? I have seen him!” he hoarsely replied. “I have followed him like a serpent or a shadow from the moment he stepped out at the station, and now I want your

help. He is working on his own hook, but so cautiously that all the detectives in the world would not catch him napping. Nothing but a good plant will tempt him from this course, and if you would catch him you must be sure of every step. Now, I have a plan which, if it pleases you and works well, cannot fail to land The Ruffian in prison. Look here ; what pick-pocket could resist that ? ” and he pulled out from inside his loose coat a bulky morocco pocket-book, crammed full of a semblance of bank-notes and coin.

“ Don’t shake your head,” he continued, with a faint trace of a smile. “ Even if I should fail and lose it, there will be no great harm done, for they are only flimsies and screaves. But we must not fail ; and, as he is no common criminal, to effect his capture you must be prepared to give me uncommon assistance. In the first place, there must be a secluded spot at which the robbery may be safely committed. It would be utterly useless to tempt him on the open course. He’s on the shallows, I can see, but if he were actually starving he would not risk his safety for a penny, so much does he dread being spotted. For this reason, I think there is no place will do better than the gloomy end of the refreshment booth. I am already half-drunk—”

I laughed and interrupted.

“ You don’t look like it, either in talk or reasoning,” was my comment.

“ You misunderstand me,” he hurriedly pursued. “ I mean in appearance on the course, and while close to The Ruffian. I have even been abusive and quarrelsome, and in one of my staggers stamped on his polished boot with my crutch as I would stamp on his life ! He cursed me heartily, but he did not know then that I carried this pocket-book. I have now only to display it before his greedy gaze, appear more drunk and suspicious of pickpockets than ever, and then make my way slowly to the refreshment booth, choosing the time of a race, when the place will be empty, for the experiment.”

“ But are you bearing in mind the man’s desperate character ? ” I asked. “ He will be sure to strike out, perhaps kill you on the spot, rather than be taken.”

“ I am prepared for that,” was the quiet reply, given with a gleaming of the eyes as he lightly tapped the outside of his breast-pocket. “ If he tries it, I shall shoot him ! Do you understand ?—shoot, kill ! You say he is desperate ; so am I ! But in this strait you may be close at hand to help me Con-

concentrate your men, and instruct them to surround the booth on every side the moment he and I enter. Not a moment before, or he would instantly sniff danger and back out. As for yourself, I have more confidence in your strong hand than a dozen others, and would like you to get into the booth before us and secrete yourself under the form at the left corner of the dark end, which will be close to the spot at which I will take my seat and work the oracle. Do you agree?"

"Agree? Certainly I agree," I responded, catching his own excitement and enthusiasm. "If we only cage him I shall sleep sounder to-night than I ever did. The dream is almost too good to come true."

"It will come true, sooner or later," firmly returned M'Indoe, with a sharp clenching of the hands. "My life will not be a long one; I know it—feel it; but I will not die till that is accomplished. My spirit could not rest in the grave otherwise!"

I looked into his sunken cheeks and hollow eyes, and felt a deep pity for the man, wasting slowly under one consuming passion.

"Don't engage in this affair," I said, touching him kindly on the shoulder. "Don't! if you think you will suffer by it."

"I would suffer more by leaving the scheme untried," he promptly replied. "Danger!—suffering!" he sadly continued. "Ah, I know what they are already. They have now no terrors for me. Follow me along the course, but keep on the opposite side, and the moment I stumble and fall, make straight for the refreshment booth. You can pass the word to your men as you go along."

He was out with a drunken hobble from the shelter of the cabs, into which he had drawn me, and round the grand stand into the roar and bustle in front, before I could say another word; and then, after a moment's interval, I also got out and across the course, where for the first time I came across M'Sweeny.

"The devil himself couldn't catch that thafe of a Jew," he whispered, in an angry burst. "I've watched him, and dodged him, and tried him in every way, but he won't work with my eye on him. I'd give a week's wages only to have the honour of clapping the bracelets on his iligant wrists."

"Then get the men together, and tell them to keep an eye on the refreshment booth, and the moment they see a cripple,

followed by the Jew, enter, let them surround it quietly on every side. And you, take up your position at the door, and have your arms open ready to embrace one of your dearest friends, should he take a sudden notion for fresh air and freedom."

M'Sweeny stared after me as I moved quickly away in incredulous astonishment, and then a light broke over his face, causing a gentle but expressive lowering of the left eyelid.

"I see," he cried, in a hurried whisper. "Whoop, hurroo ! if we should only ketch him !" and then he was off on his errand, nudging plain-clothes men here and stopping wondering policemen there to whisper the instructions I had delivered.

Meanwhile, I hurried on till I again got in sight of M'Indoe. The first bell for a fresh race had just rung, and the crowd were thickening fast all along the rails near the winning-post ; but I found that M'Indoe, for a reason of his own, was stumping along the empty course *inside* the railings. This, of course, drew all eyes to his odd-looking figure, and as he exhibited all the signs of a man just drunk enough to try to walk stiff and steady, a deal of chaffing followed him along the line of faces. All at once I saw him pause, steady himself against the inside of the palisade, and drunkenly begin to feel his pockets ; and, looking sharply about on my own side of the course, I was not slow to detect the cause. Within six yards of where I stood was a young powerfully-built man, with a Jewish cast of face, wearing a long Highland cloak of grey tweed, and having his dark eyes hidden behind a pair of blue spectacles. I started, and my breath came quick and fast at the sight. The redoubtable Ruffian—the unfathomable mystery—stood within a few yards of my elbow, in the guise of a gentleman, and in the broad daylight. More : his attention was completely absorbed by the movements of the sham drunken cripple opposite, and he never once, as far as I am aware, was cognisant of my presence.

It was a curious spectacle watching these two men, knowing all their past lives, their present circumstances and aims, and looking at them playing such a deep game in the midst of such merriment, bustle, and uproar. Yet it was as saddening as it was exciting ; one face instantly lighted by ruthless greed and ferocity as the pocket-book was displayed, its contents inspected, and the whole carefully buttoned up in the cripple's breast-pocket ; and the other, even through all the disguise of bandages, dirt, and short-cropped beard, showing the deep

lines of a cankering sorrow and eternal hate that must in the end eat away life itself.

M'Indoe slowly resumed his crutches, and, after appearing to gaze suspiciously about, went staggering and stumbling along to the end of the inside palisade, where he got out of the course and took his way back towards the refreshment booth at a slow pace. Having followed his figure thus far, my eye instinctively came back to the spot where I had last seen The Ruffian. He was gone !

I could scarcely believe my own eyes, and wildly trotted about looking up and down the course on every side, till at last, giving it up in despair, and coming back to M'Indoe's figure, I was again welcomed by a glimpse of the grey tweed Highland cloak and shiny new hat stealing along in the wake of the drunken cripple. The bait had taken, and The Ruffian, with his eyes open, and in broad daylight, was blindly walking into the carefully-prepared trap !

As the second bell for the race had now rung, and a few of the horses and jockeys were already prancing about the course, and as I knew that M'Indoe had fixed the time of the race for the experiment, I hurried along on my side of the course, keeping one eye on the singular pair and another on the refreshment booth, whose shelter I was now anxious to reach. At the same moment, I could detect a movement among my men in the same direction, which, though imperceptible to the ordinary spectator, at once assured me that they were on the alert, and ready to obey my order to the letter. I reached the booth just as the last of the visitors was hurrying out towards the race-course ; and then, looking back towards M'Indoe, I saw him suddenly stumble and fall flat on the green turf. In an instant some bystanders helped the apparent cripple to his feet, and I thought the eyes would start from my head when I saw that the most officious among the voluntary helpers was The Ruffian. But this was M'Indoe's signal to me to retire into hiding, and after a word with the head waiter I got up to the shady end of the compartment, and crawled in under the form, close to the boards forming the wall of the booth. The position was anything but a comfortable one ; for, in addition to being cramped by the small space, there was a hole in one of the boards which let in a cold draught strong enough to have given me rheumatism in the neck for life. Presently I heard a drunken shuffle near the door, and saw one foot and two sticks come slowly stumping up the side of the

room towards me. Almost immediately after, the door was again darkened, and this time I saw the well-polished boots of The Ruffian saunter carelessly in and rest themselves close to the drunken cripple. Even the waiters were now crowding out to watch the race; but, under any circumstances, the drunken cripple would at once have been expelled had I not prepared the way by priming the head waiter.

"Brandy! brandy—quick!" gurgled M'Indoe, in a sleepy tone. "Don't think I'm not able to pay; got lots of money—lots, lots!" and again the bulky pocket-book was displayed in a way that must have made the eyes of The Ruffian fairly sparkle in his head.

The brandy was brought, and then, according to my previous instructions, the waiter retired to the other end of the building.

But M'Indoe only played with the liquor, spilled the half of it over the white cloth, again brought out the pocket-book, glaring searchingly at The Ruffian the while, and then, placing it in his breast-pocket, and keeping his hand there as if to ensure his safety, he very rapidly dozed over and fell asleep. The Ruffian, who had merely called for a bottle of lemonade and a sandwich, edged nearer and nearer to the drunken man. The great bell clanged noisily outside; I could hear the loud murmur of voices as the race was started, but above all I heard the beating of my own heart as The Ruffian stooped over the prostrate figure on the form, and in one hushed moment listened to his heavy breathing. Apparently satisfied, he gave one quick look round the deserted booth, and then slipped out from under his cloak a long white hand with taper fingers. The hand stole softly across the drunken sleeper, gently undid the button holding the coat close, and vanished by slow degrees from sight. Then out flashed M'Indoe's hand, holding a pistol ready cocked, and the petrified villain staggered back with a yell of surprise, as if the bullet had already gone through his heart, and the pocket-book dropped helplessly from his hand.

"No, you don't!" hoarsely cried M'Indoe, starting up and levelling the pistol within an inch of his face. "The Ruffian! caught at last!—caught at last!"

"Why—who—who are you?" stammered the masterly scoundrel, in a gasp of amazement, for once completely taken by surprise.

"Who am I? Ha, ha, ha!" returned M'Indoe with a frenzied laugh of delight, as he tore off the bandages which had shrouded his features. "Behold me—Hugh M'Indoe!"

A yell of bitter hate and fury burst from the throat of the trapped criminal as he recognised the features, and at the same instant saw me springing as it were from the earth on the opposite side of the table; and instantly he had made one terrific spring—crash over bottles, glasses, and decanters—straight for the door. He reached the opening, but started back as he saw crowding up before him a dense mass of detectives and policemen, with M'Sweeny conspicuously in front with arms widely extended; and before he could recover himself, M'Indoe and I were upon him like sleuth-hounds. Down we went together, I grasping his hair with one hand and one of his wrists with the other, and M'Indoe throttling him with all his might in front; but never till that moment had I believed that one man could possess the extraordinary power that now came tingling along The Ruffian's muscles. M'Indoe and I were little better than children in his grasp, and with one bound he was again on his feet carrying us both with him, and struggling, kicking, and even biting, in his prodigious efforts to shake free. But it was only for a moment. M'Sweeny sprang forward, and, snatching a staff from one of the policemen, shoved the thick end of it bodily into the open mouth of the struggling thief; then with a rush and a shout the others closed in and pinioned him on every side. A great crowd instantly swarmed up around us, wondering no doubt that such a fuss should be made about the capture of a gentlemanly-looking Jew, with nothing of the wolf about him but the eyes and teeth; but it took fully a dozen men to march him off to the little station, holding him on every side, and never once trusting him with his feet on the ground. There he was firmly bound, and then we got a secure conveyance, and drove with him up to Edinburgh in triumph. M'Indoe, though bitten in the cheek to the bone, and bleeding profusely, could not be induced for a moment to lose sight of the prisoner till he was fairly entombed in the strongest cell in the Lock-up; and then there came a sudden revulsion of the nerves, and with a gentle sigh he fainted away like a girl in my arms.

But a few weeks' ferreting and inquiry convinced us that as yet we could not book The Ruffian for a heavy sentence. None of his gang could or would identify him as their leader; and in the end we had to be content with the charge of pick-pocketing, aggravated by a vicious assault upon one of her Majesty's lieges while gallantly aiding the police in his capture;

for which, it being his first conviction, he was sentenced to nine months' imprisonment.

When the sentence was pronounced, he rose in the dock with a smiling countenance, bowed low to judge and jury, and then turned to where M'Indoe sat beside Nosie Mincher among the audience—

“Hugh M'Indoe,” he whispered, with deadly distinctness, looking straight into the other's eyes with a ferocity which no words could describe, “when I come out again, I shall burn you alive! Remember!”

“Say maybe!” chucklingly retorted Nosie. “It's a gone game wi' ye; but mind, if there's to be more of it, I'M IN!” and then the scowling Ruffian was led out of sight.

THE CURSE OF SIN.

IN these scribblings I might have painted it as one of the easiest things in the world to shake off the trammels of crime, but stern truth has forced me to an opposite course. To the commonest understanding it must be palpable that the criminal is placed on a steep and slippery incline, where the downward course is easy, but where the upward steps require a fight, tooth and nail, for every inch of the way. As far as I have been able to discover, indeed, nothing great or noble which has yet blessed our world ever was accomplished without a fight, even when the curse of past sins did not cling about the skirts, as in poor Polly Mincher's case, which it now falls to me to relate.

One beautiful morning in spring, Polly Mincher, housemaid at Ivy Bank Villa, a rather lonesome house standing between the Grange and Morningside, tripped lightly out on to a strip of lawn in front of the house with a bundle of carpets and curtains in her arms, which she dropped on the green sward, scarcely yet dry from the dews of morning, before singling the articles out for beating and shaking. If it could have been possible to have skimmed in a magic way over the hearts of all the servant-maids in Edinburgh at that moment, I don't think a lighter or happier one could have been discovered than that of Polly Mincher. After the dispersion of the Happy Land gang, upon the occasion of the attempt upon M'Indoe's life, she had been sent to the Magdalen Home; and thence, after an interval, she had been taken into the service of one of the most active patrons of the Institution, who in the end had procured her this present situation at Ivy Bank, in which, however, nothing was known of her antecedents either by her employer or her fellow-servants. She lived in a new world, bright and fresh as the spring sunshine now streaming across the hills, with all the dark past buried out of sight, and the future, with its visions of industry, virtue, and well-doing, stretched out before her like a fairy picture. She was shut out

from the toil and moil of the dark city, and surrounded by the pure air of the country, coming straight from green, shaggy hills and fresh fields; and, perhaps, the thought that she might be followed even to this lone retreat by the curse of sin never crossed her mind, or, if it did, only as a fear to be instantly banished. Every morning the sun came glinting across the hills into her little bedroom to wake her to the songs of the birds without, not more free and happy than herself, and to the labours of a new day, bright as her own future; and then she went scrubbing, scouring, and singing through the house, actually imparting to others a tinge of the joyous ecstasy bursting from her own soul.

"Who could have believed that there was such happiness in store for a guilty wretch like me?" she said to herself one morning, after pausing in her work, and shading her eyes with her hands, as she watched a lark mounting and mounting in the heavens, singing as it went. "To be respected, commended, even loved, by all—oh! it's enough to make me throw myself on my knees before them, and confess all that is past," and the tears dimmed her eyes at the thought. "No, that would never do," she added, with a sad shake of the head; "they would spurn me—cast me forth to beggary, or worse. It is so easy to turn on the guilty, and hound them away, and crush them, and hunt them down; every one does it, even the children on the streets."

"Hi, Polly! Polly Minchie!" cried a tiny voice, from the direction of the house, and, turning quickly, she was just in time to see the curly head of a roguish little fellow of four or five dive down behind the terrace facing the lawn upon which she stood, as if to hide from sight. All the clouds instantly left her brow as she caught the flash of that sunny little face. It was only "Button," an orphan child not very closely related to her mistress, and somewhat neglected by all but Polly herself; but then he loved her, in his guileless innocence, with a strange clinging affection which did more to brighten her life and cement her to her new lot than anything else in the wide world.

"Hi, Polly Minchie!" he repeated, peeping through the pillars of the terrace, under the impression that he was most securely hidden from sight, "Hi!—where's Button?"

"Wee Button's behind the terrace, and Polly sees him," cried the housemaid, stooping down and pointing straight at his shining curls, with a smile as bright and roguish as his own.

"So he is!" burst forth the child, as if Polly had made the most extraordinary discovery in the world by the aid of powers quite supernatural; and then, with a gladsome rush, he was down the steps and into her arms.

"But Polly must work," said the housemaid, after a nestle and a kiss. "Here is a bit of carpet all folded up; Button can sit down on the top of it, and watch what a dreadful thrashing Polly will give those curtains with this long stick;" and having thus adjusted matters, in a moment she was again driving into her work, till her cheeks were as red as the roses gracing each corner of the terrace steps.

Exactly at this sunny moment—when Polly was busy with the curtains, and Button was playing on the folded carpet—a dark shadow crossed the scene. The sharp clang of the iron gate leading in from the common road without caused Polly to start round, and then she saw a woman of repulsive aspect advancing towards her, carrying before her a bundle of mats, as if for the purpose of sale. There was nothing extraordinary in the circumstance: such wanderers turned up almost daily; yet Polly, the moment her startled gaze rested on the hard features, turned first deadly white, then furiously crimson, and then, almost ready to drop to the ground with agitation, she bent down over her carpets in hope that the woman would either pass on to the house or turn back. But no; the woman came steadily on, her shadow darkening the green lawn before her, and at last Polly felt that she was by her side. The secret of the poor girl's agitation was, that in the seeming hawker she had recognised Meg Scroby, thieves' tout, and wife of the villain whose trapping I have recorded, and the same wolf-like woman who hunted down poor Kate M'Indoe.

"It's a fine day," began the thieves' tout, in her usual sneaking tones, addressing the drooping girl. "Maybe you'll be wanting a fine mat for some of the doors? I'll sell you them very cheap. I'm a poor woman and my husband is sick, and we make them ourselves."

Poor Polly, trembling in every limb, bent lower and lower over her carpets, and stammered out—

"No, thank you; the doors are all supplied."

But the woman was not to be thus easily shaken off; and, besides, there was something in the manner of the girl and the sound of her voice that roused her suspicions.

"Perhaps you'll have some old dresses, or rags, or broken kitchen stuff, that you'd like to get rid of at a good price? If

you'll only let me see it, I will pay on the spot;" and the woman made a step towards the area flat.

"No, there is nothing," desperately returned Polly, who knew too well what was the woman's real object. "You'd better go away at once."

"I am ready to drop with thirst," persisted the thieves' tout, who, of course, wished to see the inside of the house. "Could you not oblige me with a drink of water?"

"No, I dare not take any one to the kitchen," Polly was beginning, when a sharp exclamation from the seeming hawker made her start and look up, to find that at last her secret was discovered. In an instant the strong hand of Meg Scroby had clenched her wrist, and in the agitation of the moment Polly was helpless to resist.

"So! It's you! Polly Mincher!" she slowly hissed out, looking the quivering girl through and through. "I thought it strange that an *honest* girl could not look me in the face; but I understand it all now. You are ashamed of your old friend; perhaps you are passing yourself off here for—"

A faint cry from Polly drowned the rest, as the trembling girl imploringly seized the hag's dirty hands in her own, and hurriedly turned to the wondering child, sitting open-mouthed on the carpet.

"Run into the house, Button; run like a dear, wee man, and Polly will kiss you three times," she chokingly got out, trying hard to smile as she spoke, but only succeeding in forcing tears into her eyes.

"But I don't want to go," said Button, demurring. "I want to stay with Polly."

"No, no, no! you can't stay," hastily continued Polly, hiding her tears in his sunny face. "Run, or perhaps the bad woman will take you."

"I don't care for the bad woman," stoutly persisted Button. "I hate her. She has made you cry."

"No, I'm not crying; see, I'm smiling now, right into your face," cried the shaking girl, hurrying him off the lawn. "Run to the nursery, and I will come by and by."

Button reluctantly retired, but lingered doubtfully inside the terrace, while Polly once more turned to the evil shadow at her side.

"So they think you good, and honest, and straight?" sneered the woman, with an ugly scowl. "They don't know about the 'Happy Land,' or that they've got a precious bouncer and a

snow-dropper in their house. I wonder you ain't ashamed of yourself, sloping from your old friends and trying to hound me away without once looking into my face."

"What do you want? For God's sake say it out, and go!" cried Polly in a piteous burst, with a look of agony that would have melted any but the remorseless hag before her.

"Want?" coolly echoed the other, "I want lots of things; more than I'll get, p'raps. Take me down to the kitchen and give me some'at to eat, in the first place."

"I dare not—oh, I dare not!" cried Polly, with a shudder, knowing by bitter experience what a single look of Meg round the interior was likely to be followed by. "See, here is a shilling; take it and buy something, but don't ask me to become the aid to a robbery."

"Bah! you're grown wonderfully soft-hearted," growled the woman, snatching at the coin; "it's a pity your softness never made you tell them you're a prig. I don't believe even your fellow-servants know it. Come on, now; you've more money than this; fork it out or I'll peach!"

"What?—what did you say?" faintly gasped Polly, staggering back from the determined face.

"I said I would peach—tell them who ye are—and what ye've done—and how often ye've been jugged—and all that. I'll give them your character, fair and honest, in two minutes, which is more than you would do in two years. I'll tell it to both servants and ladies, and refer them to the police books for your convictions."

"No, no, you would not do that!" wailed the poor girl. "You are a woman—give me a chance. I am young—so young!—and I mean to do well; and I try to pray at nights; and I have fought with myself to bury the past; don't bring down on me the curse of my past sins—don't, if you are a woman!"

"I don't know whether I'm a woman or not," coarsely returned the hag, with a hideous leer. "I hunted down Kate M'Indoe, and she said to me, 'You're a woman in form, but in heart you're a devil.' So I am—I'm a devil! and I'll show you it, too, unless you keep a civil tongue in your head. Get me some money—quick! or I'll walk straight in and tell all!"

"But I've only a pound," pleaded the poor victim. "Oh, Meg! you won't take that, for I meant it to buy some things for my brother."

"Your brother? Humph! it'll do me more good," snarled

the thieves' tout. "What good did he do?—another turncoat like yourself; went and turned square, and now sticks to M'Indoe through thick and thin. Ugh! if my curses would blast ye all you'd have 'em thick!"

"Hush! hush!" cried Polly, with blanched cheeks; "stay there a moment, and I'll bring you the money; but don't curse—don't curse. Alas! I feel it coming down on me without your breath and wish to help it! Everything is against a thief."

She trailed wearily away towards the area flat, holding clammily by the walls to support her tottering steps as she proceeded. Half-an-hour before the whole world to her had been bathed in sunshine; now her whole life seemed overcast, and she felt as if she could have shrunk from her own shadow, while to look into the dreaded future was only to be confronted with blank despair. She reached her little room, knelt down before her little box, and then burst into tears as she thought of how often she had knelt there to pray that she might be saved from the very life and society back to which she seemed now to be fast drifting. She got out the money in a blind, half-unconscious way, dried her tears, drew on the semblance of calmness, and once more stood before the thieves' tout on the lawn above.

But the moment's interval had given this vile woman time to think. Out of Polly's terror of exposure she now thought she could make something better than the mere extortion of a paltry sovereign; and when Polly guiltily held out the money, she only drew back with an attempt at an ingratiating smile, which the poor girl knew from experience to dread more than her frown.

"No, no, Polly," she said, with a show of kindness which instantly put the other on her guard; "I was only joking about the money—keep it, keep it—and give it to your brother, or do what you like with it. I could not find it in my heart to betray you, unless you showed yourself my enemy. You and me had better be friends—it will be good for both of us;" and the words seemed more a command than an invitation.

"What do you mean?" stammered the housemaid, with a heavy sinking at the heart.

"I mean that you may keep your honesty, and I may do a good stroke of business," was the cunning reply. "The house is well stocked, the family are mostly away—don't shrink and shudder, for I know that much already without your assistance; and what is to hinder you to show us an easy way in, say by your bedroom window? Once in we could pretend to over-

come you—bind you fast, hand and foot, smash the window a little, to give colour to the thing, and then walk off with whatever is worth lifting.”

Polly's form slowly became erect and rigid as she reared herself before the other in white indignation at the audacious proposal, and the flash of her eye made Meg stare in wonderment.

“And this—this!—you really expect me to agree to!” she hoarsely whispered in reply.

“You don't need to agree to it at all,” quickly returned the cunning tempter. “Keep your honesty; I don't want you to give it up. Only leave your bedroom window unfastened, and leave the rest to me.”

“I understand—help you to a robbery,” calmly replied Polly, her quick intelligence at once laying bare the subterfuge. “I refuse! Do your worst; I remain honest!”

“Then what will you do when you are kicked to the door?” coolly inquired the thieves' tout. “Honest folk will not employ you; thieves will shun you and hunt you down. Remember Kate M'Indoe.”

“Then, like her, I can die!” sobbed poor Polly, breaking down and piteously taking the woman's hand. “Oh, do not drive me to that! Oh, why should you drive people to their ruin? Why is it that, whenever a poor girl tries to do well, the whole world starts up against her? O God! I wish I were dead—lying cold under the ground, with the grass growing over my head, and the fighting all over. The curse of sin could not follow me there, and nobody could goad me or taunt me to fresh wickedness. But oh, Meg, for once, only once in your life, do a kindness to a poor, unfriended girl, and I will bless you, and pray for you all my life. Have mercy on me!”

“You're young—very young—and silly,” sneered the hardened woman, perfectly unmoved. “You don't know the world as I do; you don't know what is good for you. Listen to me well, and decide at once. There is the window of your bedroom, where I saw you snivelling and crying like a baby only a minute ago—promise to leave it unfastened and unshuttered to-night, or this instant I go through the house and proclaim your character!”

The hag paused for the answer, watching poor Polly's face keenly, and really expecting either a defiant refusal or more piteous entreaties for mercy. But she was utterly mistaken. Her unflinching words, threats, and cold-blooded reasoning

had carried the poor girl a stage further. Polly now stood cold, impassive, and crushed, with her senses dulled to everything but her own despairing thoughts.

"It is no use struggling," she said, unconsciously speaking aloud. "Why should I fight, and cry, and pray, when the whole world is against me? I can never be a woman, respected and loved, but only a thing to be hooted at."

"Then, we may come?" eagerly and exultingly inquired the thieves' tout.

Polly gave a weary, weary sigh, and then clasped her hands hard on her breast and shivered.

"You may come or you may stay," she vacantly replied; "it will make no difference to me."

"But you will leave the window unfastened? Say yes—only say yes."

The tears crowded thick and fast into Polly's eyes, but in a mechanical way her lips shaped the words—

"Yes."

"But rouse yourself, Polly," anxiously pursued the overjoyed thief; "I'm afraid I've scared you, you look so awful. Cheer up; there's a better time coming."

Polly shivered again, and looked upwards.

"Ay—ay—a much better time," she softly breathed. "I wonder whether God will forgive me? He knows all I have suffered, and striven, and fought, and how the world seems to turn from me and spurn my weak efforts. There is One there, I have been taught, who knows it all, because He suffered it here just like me. Ah! will He ever forgive me?"

"Don't take on so, Polly; I don't half like it," whispered the thieves' tout, awed in spite of herself, and speaking in an uneasy whisper. "I will go now, and leave you to yourself; but after ten o'clock at night expect us. Good-bye," and she tried to take the clammy hand in her own; but Polly suddenly roused herself and drew back.

"No, I shall not shake hands with you," she said. "But I will bid you good-bye—ah! yes; I will bid you good-bye!" and had the grief-stricken words been meant for an eternal farewell they could not have been more solemnly uttered.

Meg Scroby said more, but whether her words were heard or understood she could not tell; and then she slunk away, satisfied at least with her miserable triumph.

After a pause, Polly started up, and resumed her work with fevered energy, that in a few hours made her cheek and

eyes glow and burn, with what her fellow-servants mistook for a rare beauty. They complimented her—God help her!—complimented her upon her agony!

In the afternoon there was a lull in the work, and the poor girl had found her way to her own little bedroom, and there she sat down and wrote the following letter, which she addressed to her mistress, the only one of the family at that time in the house :—

“MY DEAR MISTRESS AND KIND FRIEND,—I sit down to write this, half maddened with grief and shame. I have not deserved the kindness that has been showered on me by all in this house. You didn't know all : that *I was a thief*. I know I have done wrong in keeping the secret, but I will trouble no one so again. Honest people would only spurn me, and thieves would either hunt me down, or have me again one of themselves, which I will never be. I will be better away where neither honest people nor thieves can get at me. No one will miss me in the world—except, perhaps, my poor brother. Poor fellow! he too will have a hard fight. It is so easy to crush a thief who is trying to be honest, that every one, down to the senseless children on the streets, seems to take a pleasure in doing it. Now, ma'am, I will bid you good-bye; and if you hear anything of me, don't think very ill of me. I never was a thief to you. But in leaving you I must warn you. The thieves who have goaded me to this step will make an attempt to-night to break into your house by my bedroom window. I cannot give you any better advice than to go to M'Govan, the detective, at the Central Police Office, and he will take immediate steps to secure your safety. One of the thieves will be a woman well known to him, called Meg Scroby.

MARY MINCHER.”

After folding up and addressing this letter, Polly laid it in a conspicuous place, and knelt down before her little bed, and had a long passionate burst of crying, faintly moaning out a prayer for forgiveness for a great sin she was about to commit. In the midst of one of these hysterical bursts, a soft, wee hand placed on her head made her start and look up, and then she saw before her the tearful and concerned face of Button!

“What's wrong with Polly, my Polly?” he almost sobbed out.

“Nothing—nothing!” hurriedly returned the poor girl, drying her tears and straining him to her breast. “Poor wee Button, I have neglected you to-day. I thought you were asleep. How did you get in here?”

“I comed in, and I saw you sitting writing and clying to yourself, and wiping your eyes, and, oh, it makes me so—o—o sad!” and a burst of sobbing shook the wee fellow from head to foot, and drowned the rest.

“But why did you cry, Button? Hush! you see I am not

crying now," said the poor girl, steeling herself for the parting which she had hoped to avoid.

"I do-o-on't know," sobbed the child, knuckling hard at the tears in his eyes. "I thought you was goin' away. I saw you get down your bonnet, and was afraid I wouldn't see you again."

Polly averted her head; and sat very still for some moments without speaking. But though Button was strained closer to her breast, his bright eyes were busy, and he presently cried out—

"There! you're clying again; I know'd you was clying. Don't cly, Polly; and say you'll not go away."

Polly shook her head, and tears only came the faster.

"I can't stay, Button. I must go away; I'm not good enough to stay here—I'm awful bad."

"You're not bad; you're good," stoutly returned the child. "You teach me my prayers, and read to me all the nice stories out of the Bible, and I love you for it; and, oh! you're awful good! O Polly, say you'll not go and leave your wee Button."

The pleading look, the artless words, and soft touch of the innocent child for a moment made the poor girl hesitate, and she thought of rushing up to the drawing-room, falling on her knees, and revealing all; but then came a revulsion. No; she could not look her kind mistress in the face again, nor, indeed, any honest human being. By and by Button fairly sobbed himself asleep in her arms, and then she softly laid him on her own bed, and hurriedly pulled on her things and turned away to the door. One wild, backward glance she gave, which only drew her back to the bedside to kiss passionately the hot cheeks of the sleeping child, and then, like a guilty shadow, she glided out of the house and disappeared.

In a short time Button awoke. It was nearly dark, but the moment his wandering senses were collected, he looked for Polly and found her gone. More dire still, her bonnet and shawl were gone too, thus telling him beyond doubt that her threat to leave the house had actually been put into execution. He crawled out of the bed, and very soon found the letter which, to Button's mind, was the cause of all the grief and trouble.

"I'll take her the letter and make her come back," he reasoned. "I can't do without Polly; I'll go and find her."

Now, under the circumstances, to have asked an experienced

detective to hunt for Polly, would have been only to be rewarded by a grave shake of the head ; but to Button, who was scarcely five, and didn't know one street in Edinburgh from another, and certainly did not know his own proper name, it appeared the easiest task in the world. He wandered quietly out of the house without his hat, and with the fatal letter crushed up in his hand, and in some way managed to get along the lonely road unchallenged till he arrived at streets, and hurrying people, and carts, and horses, but he could find no Polly. In this plight he was found under a lamp-post in the Causewayside by the policeman on the beat, with a crowd around him, and crying bitterly—

“I want Polly—oh, I want my Polly! Take me to Polly Minchie!”

The policeman could not take him to Polly, seeing that he had never before heard of her, but he did the next best thing: he took Button up to the Central Office as a lost child, there to remain well cared for till he might be reclaimed; and there the crushed paper in his hand was discovered and read, and, as a natural result, I was sent for post-haste to adopt speedy measures regarding its remarkable contents. I knew poor Polly and all about her reform, and the locality of her retreat; and, after knocking up Nosie and M'Indoe with the alarming news, and sending them and a number of men scouring the town in search of the distracted girl, I got together a few men and made with all possible speed for Ivy Bank. Button was taken with us, and safely delivered to the alarmed inmates; and then I planted my men in the deserted bedroom, where, shortly after eleven o'clock, first two men, and then Meg Scroby herself, got in by the window, and were received with open arms, and immediately secured and handcuffed, for which little feat they were afterwards to smart to the tune of seven years apiece.

Meanwhile Polly had wandered in a distracted way over nearly all the town in search of laudanum sufficient for her purpose. A strange wildness in her manner, and an unnatural brightness in her cheek, led the various chemists to refuse to sell the poison without first questioning her in a way to which she would not submit. At first she had vainly asked for six-pennyworth of laudanum; but by and by, finding that it roused suspicion, she moderated her demands; and at last, by cunningly getting a pennyworth at different shops, she made up the required quantity, and, slipping into a dark entry on the South

Bridge, she swallowed it all and crouched down in a corner to die. But it happened that the two policemen on this beat, having an eye on the entry she had chosen, by reason of a shebeen in one of the lower flats, slipped into the stair to watch, and, as a matter of course, stumbled on the crouching figure, which they instantly pounced upon, thinking that she was drunk. She was dragged between them out to the light, a crowd gathered round, and then a remark from one of the bystanders, and a peculiar odour about the breath of the senseless girl, sent one of the men back into the entry to search about with his lantern, when he discovered three small phials, all labelled, "Laudanum—poison."

They did not take Polly to the Office, but ran with her, right along the Bridge, with the crowd eagerly helping to bear her to the Infirmary, where the stomach-pump was at once applied, and poor Polly roused and kept moving about till she was at last pronounced out of danger.

Next day I was allowed to go in and see her, taking with me her brother Nosie, and also poor wee Button, who had cried and raved the whole night to be "taken to Polly." The poor, stricken girl cried very quietly, and took the child in her arms as a mother would who had been unexpectedly snatched from the grave; and thus I left them. Of course, as soon as she was well, she had, as a matter of form, to be taken up and arraigned on a charge of attempting to take her own life; but we so represented the case, backed by the kind lady from Ivy Bank, that she was merely dismissed with a caution. Her mistress, utterly unselfish, then strongly urged her to return to her situation as if nothing had occurred, even offering to dismiss every other servant, if they should demur, rather than lose her. But Polly, after a long talk with her brother and M'Indoe, had firmly resolved on a new course: she would emigrate to Australia. Thus, then, it was arranged—M'Indoe paying her passage, and the lady providing her outfit.

Five years after, I received a letter from her which read like a living poem, and which I only regret that I cannot insert here. She was doing remarkably well, and was married to a wealthy sheep-farmer; but what was of infinitely greater moment, she was happy, and, as she said, could "go down on her knees every night, with her dear husband by her side, and thank the great Father above who snatched her from the very jaws of death to show the world that there is mercy, and hope, and life for the very worst."

A FIGHT AGAINST FORGERY.

MANY criminals adopt as a fixed idea the thought that they are martyrs with an unavenged wrong. In their own mind they are heroes, with a long account against some one who is to be pitched into, generally an unoffending policeman or detective. I have a firm belief that Big Dave, the subject of the present sketch, when hunted out of the "Happy Land," considered himself a very ill-used person—robbed of his rights, and cruelly shut up in prison. Had Dave, after the incidents of the following sketch, only got his fingers on me, I have no doubt he would have eased his oppressed mind a little; but he didn't—which is perhaps as well on the whole, as then I might not now have been covering the paper before me with these scribblings.

David Kelroy, or Big Dave, as he was called, was the wreck of a powerfully-built ruffian, and latterly occupied a ruinous garret in a little lane running off the east side of St Mary's Wynd, now cut away by new buildings. Dave professed to be an umbrella and bellows mender, but he was really a criminal of the worst type—a go-between, an area sneak, a scenter-out of every kind of plunder, and at times—in his more desperate moments, and when famishing for drink—a ruthless house-breaker, whom it was about as safe to meet and oppose in the dark as a flying express engine. He tramped about a good deal, drank like a fish, and had no wife, but only two little ragged atomies of boys, whom he made it a point to regularly half-murder when the world without had used him badly, or heedlessly ruffled his temper.

Every one who knows anything about Edinburgh has an idea of what St Mary's Wynd is on a Saturday night. From six o'clock till twelve or one, there is a ceaseless commotion in which the excitable Irish temperament comes strongly to the front. Quarrels, fights, and screams are not hourly, but minutely occurrences; and policemen, even going in threes, find themselves at times almost powerless.

Down this wynd, on a Saturday night, a thoughtful engraver happened to take his way, in making a quick cut towards his home at the southside, and at last found himself stopped by a denser mass of people than usual, which was jammed thick and close into the court I have alluded to as Big Dave's abode. There was no swaying to and fro, or voluble cursing and screaming for the police in this crowd; and, pressing his way in, Mr Hamilton curiously inquired what was wrong. Some shrill screams, far above, coming from a lighted garret window to which all eyes were directed, answered the question in a way; but, startled a little at the stolid indifference of those about him, Mr Hamilton sharply repeated his question.

"Oh, it's only Big Dave killing one of his boys," was the cool reply of the man addressed. "He often does it—most every Saturday night."

"But what have they been doing?" was the horrified query.

"Doin'? doin' nothing," said the man, with a laugh at what he considered simplicity in the questioner. "They're not fit to do much yet—just little 'uns, ye know, and he warms them well whenever he gets drunk."

"Horrible! and will no one interfere or send for the police?" excitedly rejoined the engraver, almost sickened by a fresh burst of screams from above.

"Interfere? yes, if they want their head smashed," said the man, with a pitying smile. "The police won't interfere unless some one gives Dave in charge, and that some one wouldn't be very safe after."

"I'll interfere, and I'll give him in charge too, if this is not stopped—it's terrible!" and Mr Hamilton resolutely pressed through the crowd and up the narrow and worn stair, while the man merely turned away with an expressive shrug of the shoulders.

The top stair was a wooden one, and as it led to but one door, and from that door the piteous screams and entreaties still came, Mr Hamilton had no hesitation in thundering at it with both clenched hands at once. Instantly there was a pause in the shouting and screaming—an astonished pause, as it seemed—and then the gruff voice of Big Dave demanded, "Who was there?"

"Open the door instantly, or I'll break it in!" was the fearless reply, and the slender engraver gave a vigorous kick which made its timbers quiver again.

Another short pause, a heavy footstep across the floor, and

the door was thrown open by the big ruffian himself, holding in one hand a thick coil of rope, and in the other a ragged and quaking boy of some ten years. Another poor atomy of the same age—they were twins—crouched sobbing in a corner. Dave was flushed with drink, and blazing with fury as well.

"Let's see the big man that's going to break in my door," he scornfully cried. Then he looked down on the slender form of the gentleman with undisguised contempt, and said, "Was it you who knocked?"

"It was. The whole place is disturbed with your cruelty and brutality. What are you doing to the boys?—killing them?" and, big as he was, Dave winced and cowered before the flashing eye of the gentleman now standing in the middle of the room.

"What's that to you or anybody else?" he doggedly replied. "They're my own; can't I do what I like with them?"

"Not while there's a law in the land, and any one less callous than yourself," sternly answered the engraver, behind whom one of the cowering boys had tremblingly crept as he spoke.

"You won't keep them, will you?" blustered Dave, taking no notice of the action of the boy. "I'm a poor man, and I only wanted them to go out and earn a penny—*honestly*—to put over Sunday; but the one says he's ill—nothing but laziness—and the other's been corrupted into goin' to a school where they teach boys to set themselves up agin their fathers. If I had them that invented schools, I'd school 'em!"

The boys shuddered and cowered closer to the stranger; and the engraver, not very dull in perception, caught the feeling, and understood the position at once. He thought of the future of the boys to which such a brutalising training must infallibly drift, and for a moment a mist came over his eyes, which hid the three strangely contrasted figures from his sight.

"They're no use—not a bit. I don't know why I should be burthened with them," growlingly continued the ruffian. "Puling, whining brats, not worth picking off the street. I've been to the poorhouse with them, but they won't take 'em off my hands. Ecod! I've a good mind to take ye both out to the canal some night, and pitch ye in, with a heavy stone to keep ye down."

The boys both shrank behind the gentleman, and one in his fear put up a little hand, the confiding touch of which thrilled the stranger through.

"There's the Industrial School; why cannot you take them

there, if you are determined to get rid of them?" huskily suggested Mr Hamilton.

"Too full, curse 'em!" sharply returned the ruffian. "I've been there about them, but they've got no money to keep more, they say. Everybody's agin me. I'll sell 'em both cheap—dirt cheap—to anybody, and ax no questions after. You're ready enough interferin'; now would you buy 'em?" he added callously. "Five shillings for the pair, and a glass for luck—what do you say now?"

Mr Hamilton stared at the man in disgust and incredulous astonishment, unable to conceive it possible that a father would thus in a land of liberty seek to barter his own flesh and blood for a few paltry shillings.

"Don't stare, I'm in earnest; hand over the tin and the thing's done," sharply pursued Dave.

Still the gentleman hesitated in bewilderment, and while he did so one of the boys touched him quietly and reverently on the hand, looking up tearfully in his face.

"Do buy us, sir," he eagerly whispered, "and then we'll be so good; and when I get strong I'll run errands for you and help you ever so much. Oh, do buy us, and take us away!"

"I am willing to take you away, and promise that you will be well cared for," slowly answered the engraver; "but as to buying you, that is out of the question: the law does not allow such a thing."

"Oh, the law be hanged!" growled Dave; "You don't come over me that way. You don't get 'em without the tin, call it what you like. Hand me the five bob in a present, if you like that better, an' take the brats all the same. I'm not particular; only too glad to get rid of 'em."

"Would you sign a paper agreeing to leave them unmolested ever after?" asked the engraver.

"I'll sign anything for five shillings; forge the Queen's name for tuppence," roughly returned Dave. "Write it out and try me."

Mr Hamilton gave one more glance at the pleading faces of the ragged atomies at his side; then taking out a pocket-book, tore a leaf from it and wrote for some moments in silence. Dave took the proffered pencil without the slightest hesitation, and, having explained that he could not write, boldly affixed his mark close to the words "David Kelroy," the boys looking on the while in breathless interest.

"Now, the tin," he said carelessly; and then as the five

shillings were counted into his hands, he roughly kicked the boy nearest him towards his new protector, saying, "There, go along—I know who'll rue their bargain first. I'm precious glad to get shut of ye both."

The boy—rather weakly in appearance—staggered forward slightly from the force of the blow, but had strength enough to seize the engraver's hand and raise it to his lips; then a quiver shook his whole frame, and without a word he burst into tears.

"Oh, sir!" he at last chokingly ejaculated, dabbling the engraver's white hand against his dirty, wet face, "you're very good to us. Oh, thanky for buyin' us; we're sich a bad bargain that nobody would ever buy us afore. We'll never forget it, me an' Bob—we'll never forget wot kind you were."

"Out ye go, snivellin' fools!" growled Dave. "Ye've no right here now, an' never let me see yer faces again;" and out they went accordingly, Dave snapping and locking the door after them.

Mr Hamilton had made a strange bargain—one which I could believe no one ever made in Edinburgh before or since—but now that it was over, and the excitement dying out, he scarcely knew what to make of his purchase. Down in the babbling and crowded street, he paused and looked at the dirty and ragged figures of the twins a little ruefully. He had no children of his own, it is true; but his housekeeper was a prim old lady, with notions of her own, and he was by no means sure of the reception she might accord the two objects following so humbly at his heels.

"You'll follow me, boys?" he said, half expecting them to give him the slip the moment his back was turned.

"Yes, sir; oh yes, sir—anywheres," eagerly responded the weaker of the two, hobbling along manfully at the side of his brother. "Bob's stronger nor me, an' he'll help me along. We'll brush your boots in the mornin', and run your messages; and, oh, we'll be awful good!"

Mr Hamilton was puzzled. The boys were so docile, and yet so eager to show their gratitude. He walked on, but, glancing round at the foot of Drummond Street, he found them still trudging in his wake. He still felt nervous and fidgety; but a whispered speech of one of the boys at his back, in one of the quieter streets, decided him on his course. It was Tommy who spoke, and his tone was exultant.

"I say, Bob, aren't you glad?" he said. "P'raps we'll get dinner every day now."

"I don't care whether I get dinner or not," sturdily returned Bob. "He saved us from bein' killed, an' I like him for *that*."

"Well, so do I," said Tommy; "an' p'r'aps we'll not be more than half-killed any more."

"I'm sure we won't," was the confident reply. "If it hadn't been for you, I'd have run away long ago."

In Roxburgh Street, Mr Hamilton paused and let himself in at a main door, inviting them kindly to follow. Much to his relief, his housekeeper was not in the house; and his first business was to take the waifs down to the kitchen and teach them a practical lesson in soap and water. Then he led the way upstairs to a grander room than they had ever been in before, and, searching long among a bunch of keys which he took from his pocket, he opened up a little brown trunk, leant thoughtfully on the edge of the box, with his back turned to the boys, and then appeared to forget all about them and what he was there for.

Tommy, by craning his neck very high, could see that the trunk was full of boys' clothes, carefully folded and arranged, and just such a size as might be expected to fit them; but it was a strange movement of Mr Hamilton, with his hand across his eyes, that hushed and awed him most.

"He's cryin', Bob," he whispered, nudging his brother on the arm; "see, he's wipin' his eyes quiet, so as not to let us know. P'r'aps he'd a boy like us once himself. P-p-pre-tend ye don't see no—nothing;" and Tommy made a furtive dive at his own eyes with his knuckles, and turned away. Even the sturdy Bob winced a little as he watched the movements of their benefactor. Mr Hamilton slowly took out the clothes—trousers, jackets, shirts, and neckties—many of them scarcely worn; a boy's box of drawing instruments, some sketches in pencil, a box of colours, a little hymn-book, and, lastly, a Bible. He laid them all down but the Bible, which he lingered over with a shaking hand, and which Bob could now see was wet here and there with dropping tears. After a minute or two Mr Hamilton rose from his knees by the side of the little trunk, still holding the Bible in his hand, and crossed the room to where they were standing, hushed and silent.

"I am going to give you better things than those you have on," he said in a tolerably firm voice—"things which were once worn by a boy of my own."

Here his voice quivered a little, and Tommy wished he was somewhere else, that he might cry without being seen.

"But first I wish you to promise me something—solemnly, as you would to your God; but there, what am I saying? Poor things, you don't know much about a God, do you?"

Bob shook his head sadly, and said—"Not much;" but Tommy looked up eagerly and said—"Oh, yes; I've heerd tell on Him, sir."

"Well, this book I have in my hand is a Bible—you know what that is?"

Both boys said "yes," and Tommy added—"What the missionary carries in his pocket."

"Just that. Now I want you to put your hands on it, and say after me—'I promise never again to commit a crime or do a dishonest action, or willingly have intercourse with bad people.'"

"The boys instantly put out their hands, dropped on their knees, and repeated the words distinctly, and without hesitation. Then with a tender and lingering fondness, he handed them the boys' clothes which he had brought out of the trunk. They drew them on in silence, and found them a tolerably good fit; but when Tommy again looked up he was not surprised to see the face of their benefactor dewy and wet, though radiant withal.

After enjoying the best supper they had eaten for many a weary night, and being introduced to a very stiff and exact housekeeper, whom they thought not nearly so nice as Mr Hamilton, the two boys were shown to a little bed-closet, in an out-of-the-way nook in the house, where they stretched their legs luxuriously in soft cool sheets which made them rub their eyes and secretly pinch themselves, to make sure that they were not asleep and dreaming.

"I say, Bob, isn't this grand?" whispered Tommy, when they were at last left alone.

"Yes," said Bob, reflectively; "and the best of it is, that we're sold to him, so that *he* can't come and take us back to whop us, and send us out to prig."

The boys never spoke of their father by name—it was always merely *he* or *him*, never "father;" and this peculiarity they retained to the end.

"He's to send us to an institution next week too, so we'll be precious well off," added Tommy.

"Do you see that round shining thing at the windy, Bob?"

"It's only the moon," said Bob, opening his eyes to look.

"Yes, but I was thinkin'," Bob—I was just thinkin',"

slowly observed Tommy, "I couldn't help it—that it's like mother lookin' in at us with a glad face. P'r'aps she's happy away up there to see us so well off—eh?"

He nudged his brother for an answer, but found then that Bob was already asleep.

"Poor Bob, he got the most whoppin'—always did—an' he's quite done up," said Tommy, tucking the clothes better up over his brother. "Bob always sticks up for me, an' fights for me; and I don't care who knows it, I like Bob."

He wreathed his arms about his brother, and his eyes too closed in sleep, while the calm moon floated slowly across the great blue arch above, looking down unmoved on a city's peace or turmoil, darkest crimes or wildest sorrows.

Mr Hamilton had thoroughly intended to have the waifs placed in some hospital or charitable institution; but when the beginning of the week came, he found himself too busy to make the necessary arrangements, and he shoved them both into a school near by, till a more favourable opportunity should occur. At this school the two made marked progress; and altogether they appeared to be so grateful and obliging, that their benefactor at length became loth to part with them, and allowed them to remain.

Big Dave never once came near, and finally disappeared from Edinburgh, and was all but forgotten. After a good drilling at the school, it became necessary to decide upon a profession for the boys, and as Bob had developed steadily in strength, and showed an irrepressible longing for the sea, he was apprenticed on board a merchantman, and thus seen at home only at wide intervals. Tommy continued slender and delicate, and sensitive to a painful degree; and as he showed rare artistic skill and ability, Mr Hamilton readily agreed to train him to his own profession of a steel engraver. At this work Tommy made such rapid progress as to astonish even his benefactor, and not only so but to develop himself in another direction in art as well. After repeated trials, Tommy at last struck on a good subject for a picture, and though he was only sixteen, by Mr Hamilton's advice, he sent it in to the exhibition of the Royal Scottish Academy. After it was sent off he thought of a thousand little touches by which it might have been improved; despaired one moment and hoped the next; and almost made himself ill by not sleeping a wink for nearly the whole of the week of waiting. At last, with trembling steps and fast beating heart, he took himself to the Academy

to inquire the fate of his picture. At the door, a well-known artist—himself on the Council and a patron of Mr Hamilton—met the white face, and smiled right out in a hearty way that almost made Tommy faint on the steps.

“Ah, Tommy, is that you? You needn’t go in,” he lightly said; and as he paused there, Tommy gave himself and his picture up for lost. “Your picture’s all right. It’s accepted.”

Tommy staggered and gripped the artist hard by both hands, as much to support himself as to express his joy.

“It’s not to get a great place,” continued the artist, “low down in one of the arches, but it’s always a beginning, you know. And, hist!—a word in your ear—the whole Council, without exception, pronounced it very promising. There, away you go now!” and with a parting squeeze at Tommy’s hand he was off.

Poor Tommy! everybody said he should have been a woman, he was so tender, sensitive, and soft-hearted; and certainly to look at him there, as he stood on the great steps of the Academy, staggering forward to grip at the railing with his left hand, and knuckling softly at his eyes with the other, as he gazed after the burly form of his good-humoured friend, the charge did not appear an unjust one. And then, the first revulsion over, he was so happy! He could have leaped into the air—jumped to the moon, he thought—and was nearly beginning to dance on the pavement where he stood. He turned up the Mound to return home, and the cold January wind now smote cheeks glowing with colour which before had been white and wan. He felt as if the treasures of the whole earth had been suddenly poured out at his feet, and wondered that the passers-by did not understand his feelings and envy him.

Up at the High Street the passengers got denser, and he had to slacken his smart walk to avoid jostling them. The early gloaming was just coming on, and the trotting lamplighters beginning their work; but the light was still good enough to recognise faces; and at this crossing Tommy did recognise one—even before a brutal oath escaped the lips—which sent him staggering backwards in horror and dismay. Big Dave, his own father, flushed with drink, but the most ragged and debauched-looking figure which he thought he had ever clapped eyes on, was staggering forward with the cross stream of passengers, when his eye fell on Tommy’s radiant face, and, wheeling round, he put out **one** strong paw and seized him **by** the wrist.

"So! it's you, Tommy?" he said, in no pleasant tone. 'My own son grow'd a gentleman, and ashamed of his father on the street. Well, I knew it was a hard world, but I didn't know it was so hard as that."

"You're no father to me, and never were," chokingly exclaimed Tommy, trying to shake off his fear and trembling. "I don't wonder at any one being ashamed of you; you're a sight to frighten the crows."

"It don't matter what I was, or what I am: I'm your father all the same; and don't anger me, or I may prove my power over ye. Ye're not twenty-one yet, nor won't be for many a day, so I can do what I like wi' ye."

"Can you? I only wish Bob were here," cried Tommy; "he's big and strong, and he's at home just now. You wouldn't frighten him much or me either. You sold us, and there was an end of it. You can't expect to both have your cake and eat it."

"I don't care what ye say; there's no sellin' of human bein's allowed in this country," doggedly returned Dave, "so the law's agin' ye. It's unnatural that a father should have to go starving while his sons are rollin' in wealth and comfort. Ye ought both to be workin' for yer old father."

"What good would it do you?" quickly retorted Tommy. "You'd drink a nation's wealth if you got the chance, far less the pitiful earnings of two boys who are only 'prentices yet"

"What are ye 'prentices to?"

"I'm an engraver, and Bob's a sailor," unguardedly answered Tommy.

"An engraver?" and Dave gave a surprised and almost pleased start. "What is it ye engrave?—bank-notes?"

"Yes, sometimes, and sometimes pictures; any kind of fine work."

The news seemed to set Dave a-thinking. He eyed his shrinking son for some time suspiciously and searchingly, and then said—

"Well, I'm not goin' to starve while you're gettin' on so well. I'll think over what's to be done, but now ye've got to fork out. Tip us some money, or I'll tear it from your pockets!"

His great paws swung through the air so like the way they had done long ago that the womanish lad shrank back, feeling ready to faint on the spot. With a shaking hand he got out his little purse to give the ruffian a trifle; but Dave, not content to do

things by halves, roughly grasped the whole, purse and all ; and after carefully questioning Tommy as to his address, and the best time to see his benefactor, he strode off without a word of thanks, and was lost in the crowd.

Poor Tommy walked off with all the joy of his success at the Academy effectually damped, and a great weight at his heart which seemed to forbode evil. He reached his home, and soon made known to his brother and Mr Hamilton the cause of his oppression and grief. Then the bronzed face of Bob flushed scarlet, and his hardened fists were clenched in a way that suggested even more emphatically than his words what he would have done had his father stopped him on the street, or tried to force him in any way to acknowledge their relationship. But he scouted the idea that Big Dave would dare to come near them or annoy them farther ; and Tommy, half convinced, had begun to hope he was right, when one day they were all startled by a call from the dreaded ruffian. At first Mr Hamilton's housekeeper resolutely refused to admit the ragged wretch, smelling of hard ale and bad whisky ; but then he got abusive, and shoving past her rudely, made such a commotion that both Mr Hamilton and the lads were attracted to the spot.

"Oh, it's only me, that's all," bitterly cried Dave, in reply to their startled exclamation. "Send for a policeman—do ; and swear all sorts of lies agin your own father, about assault and robbery and so on—do it ; I should like to see you do it."

"What do you want ?" hotly demanded Bob, who had been restrained with the utmost difficulty, while Mr Hamilton showed the ruffian into a room where they could talk in quietness.

"Want ? I want you, to be sure—both on ye," said Dave. "It's time ye was doin' some'at for yer old father."

"You'll want us long ere ye get us," cried Bob with energy. "Look here ! you're my father—I admit it ; I'm too much ashamed of you to deny it ; but I'm not afraid of ye now—not a bit ! Look at that hand and arm—they're strong, and brown, and hard with fighting storm and sea—honest, hard work, which you haven't known for many a year. Well, they'll do to knock you down ! It sounds bad, doesn't it ? Knocking down one's own father ; but don't you interfere with me, or I'll do it. You've no strength in your arms worth speaking of ; and you're good for nothing but bullying poor Tommy here, who cowers before you like a woman. But I'm Bob ! I'm different ; only try to frighten me—only try it !"

"I'll frighten ye and take the fightin' out of ye too,"

hoarsely answered Dave. "With all yer bounce ye're in my power; ye're not twenty-one nor seventeen either, so till then I have the law on my own side."

"Not exactly," interposed Mr Hamilton, in his calmest tones. "The law would require you to prove yourself a fit custodian for two such well-doing lads."

"Yes, they would require your character—from your last place—the jail," triumphantly added Bob.

"Hush, boys, hush!" said Mr Hamilton, with emotion. "I cannot allow such words to be addressed to him in my hearing. Remember, whatever he may have been in the past, he is still your father and lawful guardian. Think well before you decide. I have no claim upon you whatever. I have educated you, and tried to put you in a position to make your way in the world after I am gone; but I did so unsolicited, and can found no claim whatever upon the deed. Now, on the other hand, he is your father—alone in the world, and with no fixed principle to guide him, and apparently no power to keep money or use it aright when it is placed in his hands. Which ought you to cling to?—him or me? I won't attempt to answer it for you, as I am afraid I might allow a selfish feeling to prompt the answer. I have been more than repaid for all I have done for you, therefore do not allow any feeling of indebtedness to cramp the freedom of your choice. Now, choose."

"Ay, choose; and choose the right way," hoarsely put in Dave, "or by —, I swear you'll rue it to your dying day."

Bob stood up and put his hand round Tommy's trembling form. Both their faces were radiant, and both had their eyes fixed upon Mr Hamilton's averted face.

"It's easily done," said Bob. "We're both o' one mind—Tommy and I always thought the same. No! You've been our father—you've been all that a father should be—the very best friend we ever had on earth." Here Bob's voice got husky, and Tommy silently wiped away the glad tears flowing from his own eyes. "We never knew what kindness, what goodness was, till you came and bought us—bought our hearts, our bodies, our souls, to all eternity. We'll stick by you!" and they both leant forward and encircled Mr Hamilton's drooping figure with their arms.

"I'm not done yet! I'm not done!" cried Dave, rising and towering furiously above them. "I'll force ye under my thumb—force ye! Do ye hear?—force! force! force! and then see what taunts, and bounce, and friends 'ill do for ye then."

Look out ! that's all ! " and, with a string of oaths and curses, he rushed from the house and was gone.

"Let him go, and good luck go with him," said Bob, as the burly form of Big Dave flashed past the window, with arms tossed in rage and fury, face convulsed, and great paws shaken vengefully. He'll soon be in jail again, so we've little to fear from him ; besides, we're not children now, we're men !" and the strong lad drew himself up proudly beside his delicate brother. "But look you here, Tommy ; you must watch yourself, 'cos I can't always be at hand to protect you. He knows he can frighten you, and he's cowardly enough to do it. You were always a girl at heart, but though he might murder me he could never frighten me. Keep your eyes open ; don't go near any of the dark closes ; and if he stops to speak to you, just look round for the nearest peg and give him in charge."

"No, I couldn't—I know I couldn't !" tremblingly rejoined poor Tommy, clinging hard to his manly brother. "I know I'd be so frightened as not to be able to move or say a word. It's his eyes that do it—they glare so—and the awful swing of his great hands, as if they were going to strike one."

"Bah ! strike ? I'd like to see him do it !" cried Bob, with flashing eyes and clenched hands. "If he only laid a finger on you, it would be the last crime he'd ever commit. Somebody would need to hold me off him—they would need, I tell you ; " and Bob looked as if he spoke the truth.

And so for some days Tommy never ventured to stir from the house without Bob at his side. The two were hardly ever apart, a circumstance of which Big Dave was probably quite cognisant and cursing over ; but as nothing occurred to alarm them, and their ruffianly father had never once shown his face, their wary vigilance at last relaxed a little, and Tommy went about alone as before.

One night, when Bob's leave of absence was drawing to a close, Tommy, in hurrying over from his place of business in the New Town, by way of the Mound, was rudely startled out of his dream of safety, by a burly man suddenly appearing from the foot of a narrow close leading from Bank Street to the Lawnmarket, gripping him by the delicate wrist, and dragging him forcibly down the steps into the darkness.

"There ye are again, passin' yer own father, payin' no attention when he calls ye, but hurryin' on as if the devil himself was after ye !" growled Dave, fastening his glaring eyes on the trembling lad in a way that he had always found effectual.

"Curse ye! what do ye mean by it? and why don't I screw the neck of ye for doin' it?"

"Really, father, I didn't hear you call, and never expected to see you," tremblingly answered Tommy.

"I daresay not; nor didn't want to, eh?" sharply interrupted the ruffian.

Tommy was silent, and after a moment found courage to say—

"Do you want money? was it that you stopped me for?"

"Yes, I want money, ye know that long ago," harshly answered Dave; "but I want more, I want to speak to ye in a quiet place where there's no chance of ye turnin' round like an unnatural wretch, an' givin' me up to a policeman. Come on—this way;" and he proceeded to tug Tommy up the close after him by the wrist. Tommy, pale as death, and almost fainting with terror, held back.

"Oh, I daren't go, father—I daren't—indeed, I'm in a hurry to get home and see Bob, who has to go away soon."

"I hope he will, an' that the sea will swallow him up, bones and body!" fiercely returned Big Dave, still tugging mercilessly at the delicate wrist. "Look here, say ye won't come wi' me, and I'll take yer head between my hands, and smash it like an eggshell agin them stones. I want to be had up and hung, I do; but I'm afraid they'd never do it to me, for only pitchin' into my own flesh and blood, that was walkin' about like a gentleman, leavin' me to die in the streets."

"What do you want with me? what would you have me do?" cried Tommy, in terror. "Oh, if you only say what you want you shall have it; but don't take me up this horrible place."

"It's the place I have to live in, and I should think what's good enough for me is not bad for you," hoarsely returned Dave. "I want to make terms wi' ye; you're not goin' to have it all yer own way, don't think it; and up here ye won't have either the old cove wi' the grey hair or that young whelp, Bob, to put me down."

"But you'll let me away soon after? you won't keep me long?" imploringly put in Tommy.

"That depends on what ye say and promise," doggedly returned Dave. "I don't want you—don't think it. You may go to the moon if ye like, so long as ye make me comfortable first."

Tommy resisted no longer, but allowed himself to be dragged into one of the narrow, winding stairs further up the close.

It was a weary journey to the top, for every step was worn thin, and if there was one storey there were nine—a terrible distance to climb with a sinking heart. At the top they entered a rickety passage, where Dave groped forward, still holding Tommy's wrist with a grasp of iron, and stamped three times in a peculiar way with his feet. After an interval, a door in front of them was cautiously unbarred, and a smooth-faced Irishman showed his ugly head in the space. The moment he recognised Dave and his prisoner he smiled, and drew the door wide open to admit them. The smile on his face, Tommy thought, made him look like a devil or a vampire; but he seemed quite unconscious of the fact, for he continued to smile into Tommy's face till the poor lad felt ready to drop away in a faint. The garret was larger than Tommy had expected, and was not sloping roofed except at the sides. One end of the room was occupied by a big four-post bedstead, carefully curtained over the top, and reaching quite up to the ceiling. Otherwise, the place looked innocent and respectable enough.

"An' so this is your clever son, Mr Kelroy?" said the Irishman, with another dreadful smile. "Sure, I'm glad to make his acquaintance, an' hope it'll be a long one. Stay, an' I'll get him a drop of spirits to warm his little heart, an'—"

"Oh, don't! I couldn't take it!" cried Tommy, starting up; "I must be going soon, or Bob will be wearying."

A thundering knock of Dave's fist on the table stopped his flow of words, and made him sink back awed in his seat.

"Look here! You don't get away from here so soon nor so easy," he cried, with flaming eyes turned on Tommy. "You've some work to do first."

"Work to do? What kind of work?" echoed Tommy in amazement.

"I'll show you presently," and Dave turned abruptly to the Irishman. "He doesn't want anything to eat or drink, Micky; show him up stairs to his sleeping-place."

Micky smiled delightedly, and turned towards the tent-bed at the end of the room; but at the same moment Tommy was up with a cry of alarm, and across the room to the door like a flash. But it was of stout oak, and locked and bolted in a way which would have resisted a battering-ram.

Tommy tugged and pulled at it desperately, but in vain. Dave only looked round carelessly, and chuckled softly to himself without attempting to stay his boy's busy hands.

"Pull away," he coolly said. "It'll p'raps amuse ye, an'

Tommy took the pen, paused a moment, then dashed it down on the paper in defiance.

"It's a wicked lie, and I won't write it!" he cried, with eyes flashing dangerously.

Dave seized him by the hair, and screwing it steadily round in his grasp, nearly wrenched the scalp from his head. Tommy groaned in spite of himself at the excruciating torture, and looked wildly and appealingly at Micky. But the Irishman only smiled and rubbed his hands, as if to see Tommy's head wrenched off would have given him an excellent appetite for supper; and then remarked—

"Ye'd better do it—everything he tells ye. He's master, ye know, and ye'll only be killed the sooner."

"Give me the pen," gasped Tommy; and then, while the two men looked searchingly on, he penned the following note, which was sent next day through the post to Mr Hamilton:—

"MY DEAR FRIEND,—I have been called unexpectedly out of town by a *dear friend*. I am so *happy* and *comfortable* that I think it will be some days before I return. Do not be anxious on my account, and tell Bob to be sure *not to disturb himself*.
TOMMY."

As soon as the note was written, Dave handed it to Micky to read—an accomplishment of which he himself could not boast—and this gentleman, after slowly going over it aloud, pronounced it "beautiful—just the thing." Neither of the thick-heads saw that the very emphasis here and there in the note was peculiar, and that the strong denial of danger was calculated to rouse suspicion as to coercion in the penning of the message.

Tommy was asked to address an envelope to his benefactor; and then, with a rude kick and oath from Dave, he was left in darkness—to pray through the long night that God would send Bob to his rescue, before he were forced to aid in such a crime as that proposed by his father. The morning came at last, and then, as the wretches below were not early risers, he had an opportunity in the grey light to examine his surroundings, and calculate on the chances of escape. These were not great. It is true that the dovecot might with strong hands have been wrenched inwards, and then with the assistance of one of the trunks he could easily have scrambled out on the slates; but his own womanish heart told him what the instantaneous result would be. To find himself nine storeys from the ground, perched in the clouds, as it were, with a steep sloping roof

under his feet ready to send him shooting into space?—poor Tommy shuddered and said “No.” It would be too much for him ; he would grow giddy in a moment, and be picked up in the close below an unrecognisable mass.

“If Bob could only search me out!” he feverishly said to himself. “He wouldn’t mind roofs or slates, or a dozen storeys; he’s so brave and strong, he’d save me through a hundred dangers, and think nothing of it.”

By and by he heard the noisy revellers of the night before begin to stir below. Then the Irishman thrust up his hateful smiling face to inquire after his welfare, and finally Dave himself appeared bearing an apology for a breakfast, and looking if possible more ill-natured and ferocious than ever. He watched his son consume the dirty meal in silence, and then said in a voice that brooked no contradiction—“I’m going to send out for the tools and things for your work, so if there’s any particular things ye need ye’d better speak out. We won’t grudge a little outlay, for it’ll come back again.”

Tommy looked him steadily in the face for some moments, and then said with a quaking at the heart—

“You need not send for anything for me, if it’s to do that. I shall never commit forgery or help any one to the crime. When I was taken from you, I swore with my hand on the Bible that I would never again commit a crime. Kill me if you like ; I shall not do it. I’ll fight against it while there’s a breath in my body.”

Dave said nothing, but Tommy could see the blood instantly rush to his face, and swell up the veins on his temples ; while his hands were clenched into a semblance of iron bullets. Dave was not accustomed to restraining his passions, and the effort was a severe one.

“Look here,” he hoarsely gasped under his breath, with a deadly look that almost curdled Tommy’s blood, “I don’t want to hurt ye—yer health’s of value to me, and some more just now; but don’t tempt me! Ye know I have murder enough in me without bein’ driven to it.”

Tommy sprang to his feet, and with sudden strength cried—“Well, murder me if ye like ; I shall not do it!”

What followed need not be written down. Every day we have stories of cruelty and blood-curdling brutality thrust under our eyes in some form or other, so that we can only shiver and shut our eyes. Tommy’s screams disturbed no one, except the pigeons, which fluttered out and circled uneasily in the

sunlight without till all was quiet, when they popped in and pecked contentedly as before. Dave needed no weapon—his big paws did the work, and, when the senseless victim was down, his feet, iron-shod and heavy, took their share. Then he dragged the white, bleeding thing in behind the boxes, tossed it down among the straw, and went down below to smoke excitedly by the fire, while Micky tripped about the place smiling delightedly as before. The poor sufferer above moaned and tossed, and had a hazy idea, in the midst of his wild prayers, that the roof was opening up and disclosing the form of his brother Bob, stepping sturdily in through the sunlight, and tenderly asking him to sail away over the green sea with him; but then the red mist left his eyes and showed him only the dirty rafters and the hateful face of Micky bending over him, while busy improvising one of the trunks into a substitute for an engraver's working bench.

"Ye'll be better by an' by," said the shebeener, with a smile. "It's no use goin' agin Dave, for he'll only murder ye. I'm gettin' things in order for ye to begin work; but I'm afraid ye won't touch a graver this day—yer hand'll be too shaky. Ah, ye needn't shudder when I touch ye, an' look along the roof as if ye could jump through it. It's nine—I may say ten—storeys from the ground, an' ye ain't got wings, like the pigeons, to fly with."

Tommy turned his face to the wall with the words "pigeons—fly with," buzzing strangely in his ears. They had planted the germ of an idea in his head, but he was as yet too faint and dizzy to work it out. The day passed away wearily enough, Dave discreetly keeping out of sight, and before it was over Tommy had half-consented to Micky to make a start to the "work" next day. Next day, as soon as the sun was shining in at the skylight with sufficient strength, Tommy made a show of beginning on the plate they had provided. They brought him whatever he demanded, and, among other things, pens, ink, pencil, and paper. They hardly ever left him a moment alone, but once when they did he managed to scribble out the following message, which he addressed outside to Mr Hamilton's home at Roxburgh Street:—

"MY DEAR FRIEND,—Oh, tell Bob that I'm caught by father, and tortured and beaten up in a garret near the slates. There's a lot of pigeons in the place, so you'll know it by that. They want me to engrave a plate for a forged bank-note. Oh, Bob, if you don't come and save me I'm sure to be killed.
TOMMY."

Tommy really meant to have written more, but the sound of some one coming up from below scared him, and interrupted the penning of further particulars. He hastily concealed the note, and resumed his work for the remainder of the short day, and then had the satisfaction of seeing them remove every scrap of paper, and every tool and vestige of metal, with which he had been provided during the day. As soon as it was fairly dark, and he was left alone in his prison, he stole a march on one of the sleeping pigeons, fastened the little note under it with a bit of twine, then thrust it out at one of the loop-holes, which he carefully stuffed up with rags and straw to prevent it from re-entering. The pigeon fluttered about for some time, attempting to get back to its accustomed roost, but finding the holes closed, it at last did just what a human being would have done under like circumstances—it sought another lodging. Further down the Lawnmarket lived an ingenious young gentleman, who, by a liberality with corn, had a knack of enticing to his garret dozens of stray pigeons, for which he found a ready sale, every Saturday afternoon, near the steps of the Poultry Market. This lad was in the habit of closing his pigeon-holes every night at a late hour and “taking stock,” that is, taking the strangers who happened to be present among his flock and putting them safely away in a cage against the coming Saturday. Three hours after the despatching of the note by Tommy, “Pigeon Pate” sighted Micky’s luckless pigeon among his “stock.” More, he sighted the note tied under its wing, and his eyes fairly danced when he read outside—“Please deliver at above address, and ask for five shillings, which will be readily paid.” Pate opened the note without compunction, but made nothing out of its contents except that it was urgent; and here again he saw an opening for his genius. He slept on the note—that is, he did not deliver it till morning—and the result of his thought was that he decided to insert a simple figure one before the five, which made the sum fifteen shillings. He did not know that had he altered the word “shillings” to pounds it would have been cheerfully paid; and perhaps, if he is still alive and should read this account, the revelation of what he missed will put another nail in his coffin. I hope it may.

By seven o’clock in the morning he was out at Mr Hamilton’s, and, saying he had a letter from “Tommy,” easily got the fifteen shillings and departed. Ten minutes after it had been opened and read, Bob was at my house in Charles Street, and laying it open on the counterpane before me. We had

been together nearly every hour of the day since the disappearance of Tommy, but as yet had come upon not the slightest clue to his whereabouts. The fact was that Dave, suspecting that he would be wanted, not only didn't go near any of his old haunts, but confined himself strictly to his new quarter's in Micky's shebeen. It is true that that place was called at among others, but it was never searched—indeed, Micky's smooth tongue effectually put the inquirers off the scent, as it had done many a time before.

But we had a clue, and a good one. They were forcing the lad to engrave a plate. To engrave, however coarsely, requires tools, much finer and more expensive than those which thieves generally keep about them. I would have a tour round the few dealers in Edinburgh who traded in such articles, and see if I could pick up the ends of the tangled skein. The thought was a lucky one. The very first dealer upon whom I called had sold just the things which Mr Hamilton had given me a list of to a man who had come, not once, but nearly half-a-dozen times to the place. I asked what the man was like—his dress, and so forth—and soon made out a hazy resemblance to Micky, which was at once confirmed when the dealer added—

“He was a very smooth-spoken man, though Irish, and *always smiling*.”

“That'll do,” I said, turning with a smile of relief to Bob; “I think I know where to pick him up.”

We left the shop, turned back towards the High Street, where we picked up a few men at the Central Office, and then took our way up to Micky's close in the Lawnmarket. At the foot of the stair, Bob, whose eyes would have been a fortune to a detective, looked up straight towards the narrow strip of sky seen between the close houses, and cried—

“See, there's pigeons flying about; it must be here! Send some men up to the house, while we go up this stair opposite, and see if we can get a glimpse of the roof.”

The suggestion was instantly acted upon. M'Sweeney and the others went up and confronted the astonished Micky; and when he told them that he had never so much as known Big Dave, they made every drop of blood leave his face by saying they were going to search his house, top and bottom, first taking the precaution to lock and bar the door on the inside, and plant a man against it, to prevent mistakes.

Meanwhile, Bob and myself had reached the top of the opposite land, and with some difficulty got out on the slates by

the hatch. The moment we were out Bob pointed in triumph up the opposite slates to a little "doo-cot," with four holes protruding from a skylight far up the sloping roof.

"That must be it; he's there, I'm sure," he said; "but I'll try;" and, putting his bent forefinger between his teeth, he emitted a shrill and peculiar whistle, which he had not used since the time when he and Tommy roamed St Mary's Wynd together, ragged and neglected waifs.

Scarcely had the sound died away when there came from the direction of the "doo-cot" the very echo of the sound, followed almost instantly by a scream of "Bob! O Bob! help, help!" A growling voice cursing, the sounds of a struggle, with another shrill scream from Tommy, drove the blood from Bob's face. Starting up on his feet on the steep roof, he buttoned his jacket determinedly, tugged down the cap on his head, and simply said to me, as he faced the great gap—

"I'm going! I'll get in above—you go on by the other way! Break into the house! don't mind me!"

I put out a hand to clutch him, but it was too late. With a great rush he was down the slates, and across the close to the opposite roof as nimbly and cleanly as ever desperate stag leaped a ravine. I saw him reach the skylight, wrench out the face of the pigeon-house, hurl it from him, and dive into the hide; and, waiting for no more, I got back the way I had come, and joined M'Sweeny and the others just as they dragged down the curtains and laid bare the trap-door to the hide above.

A tremendous uproar above now quickened our movements towards the trap. Bob had burst in upon his father in the very act of throttling Tommy into silence, and with one bound had sprung upon him and dragged him backwards by the hair of the head. With a growl like a baited bear, Dave turned and got his awful paws about the brave lad, and then they went struggling, and bumping, and shouting, and tumbling over the frail floor, till, with a tremendous drive, we had the trap smashed inwards; and, clambering up, settled the unnatural monster by swarming up about him, pinning him to the ground, and finally roping his legs and handcuffing his wrists behind his back.

Then we lifted down Tommy, and he and Bob, after a good hug in each other's arms, were driven off home in a cab.

Micky smiled no longer, but looked much whiter than the paper upon which I now write, as his hidden store of drink, and finally Dave himself, was brought down before his eyes.

For the first time in his life the plausible, smooth-tongued wretch had nothing to say in his defence, and his tigerish heart betrayed its true nature by his exclamation—

“How I wish I had strangled that boy the first night he was here!”

The two precious rascals were tried together, Micky getting ten years, and Dave fourteen. It was remarked that Micky *scowled* during the whole trial, particularly during the evidence of Tommy and Bob. Dave was too violent to last out his sentence. He got hurt in an attempt to maul one of the warders, and after lingering for some weeks in great pain with a broken rib, died of mortification in the right lung. Two young men—one of them attired in the dress of a first mate—received the body and saw it decently buried. Need I say that they were Tommy and Bob, or that one of them—Tommy—wiped his eyes furtively over the lonely grave as they turned away, saying—

“You know, Bob, he was our father after all.”

M'SWEENY AT A WAKE.

"I WISH to see one of the detectives," said a gentleman bursting in upon us at the Central Office one day in December, with that look of suppressed excitement which we see in some form nearly every day and can read at a glance. "I have been robbed in a most mysterious manner of a curiosity—I may say a work of art—which I would not have parted with for a thousand pounds."

As he spoke he laid his card on the table, from which I discovered that we were being addressed by "Mr Walter Brailey, No. — Rutland Square."

"It is no common robbery," he continued, when I had led him into the side-room, and announced myself ready to jot down the particulars, "and I am certain could have been committed only through some of the servants; but of that you shall judge. The article stolen is a clock. You pause and open your eyes, wondering, no doubt, how I come to put such a high value on an article of the kind. But I assure you the value is not an artificial one. There is not another such clock in the world. It was made in Geneva, and took a skilful *artiste* and his apprentice fully a year and a half to construct. The works are almost entirely of solid silver; every wheel or pivot works on a jewel, and though the whole does not occupy a square foot of space, the clock has attached a complete set of tiny silver bells, which can be arranged to play a merry chime or tune every quarter of an hour. The clock goes a year without winding up, and is arranged to show months, weeks, and seasons by the appearance of appropriate figures, all in silver, and each a perfect gem of art in its way."

The gentleman stopped, more for want of breath than the lack of more to say; and I wonderingly said—

"And do you mean to say that this valuable curiosity is gone?"

"Gone!—not a trace of it to be found," he answered, with something glistening in his eye which looked very like a tear.

"I so prided myself on its possession too, and took such care of it, that the loss is doubly severe. I had an oaken case made for it, with a glass front and a double lock, the key of which is never out of my possession. This case was fastened by two strong bolts to a heavy sideboard, where, indeed, it yet stands; but this morning, when I happened to step into the room for a moment, I found that the case was open and the clock gone."

"Did you not raise an alarm?"

"An alarm? Yes, I believe they actually thought I had gone mad. I raved and shouted and screamed; but when all were present, and I found that no one knew anything about my darling clock, I insisted that the servants, and they alone, could be the robbers, upon which they instantly, one and all, tendered the keys of their boxes, and insisted that they should be searched on the spot."

"Well, and did you do it?"

"Do it? Ay, I would have searched fifty boxes had they been there. My sister and myself went over every one of them—even Bridget Qualey's—and turned out everything; but not a trace of the clock, or anything connected with it, could we find."

"You said, 'Even Bridget Qualey's'—who is she, that you thus single her out?"

"She is an Irish girl, a most diligent and expert tablemaid, in whom we take a great interest, but who, I have reason to believe, on account of her nationality, is spitefully distrusted by the other servants. It is prejudice, I believe, and nothing else, for Bridget came out of the ordeal as spotless as the rest and apparently far more concerned."

"Very likely," I warmly returned, and I immediately made my first blunder. "Perhaps they have even connived at the robbery or concealment among them merely to make this poor Irish girl the scapegoat, and thus get rid of her. I have seen such injustice perpetrated repeatedly."

"My own thought, exactly," he cried, brightening up at the words. "I said nothing in reply to their whisperings and hints, for fear of either blundering egregiously, or of giving pain or offence to the innocent. I have left all to you, and if you can spare the time, will be happy to drive you over to examine the house and servants at once."

This was exactly my own wish at the moment; and without another word I pulled on my hat and got outside, where a cab stood in waiting, and then we were driven over to Rutland

Square, and the examination began in earnest. My first proceeding was to search the whole house from top to bottom; and then, having assured myself that the clock was actually gone, and not merely maliciously hidden, I proceeded to examine the servants separately. This occupied a considerable time, but elicited nothing calculated to throw light on the mysterious robbery. There were many hints, all pointing to Bridget Qualey, but among them all I found only one fact sufficiently authenticated to be worth noting down—namely, that she, and she alone, was allowed to clean and dust Mr Brailey's private parlour, in which stood the case containing the treasure now missing. More, it was proved beyond dispute that not one of the other servants had been near that apartment during the last twenty-four hours at least, and as certainly it was established that within that time the clock had been abstracted. Now, under the circumstances, it is plain that I had sufficient grounds upon which to arrest the girl; but then I was in a manner prejudiced against a prejudice, that which generally culminates in the significant intimation, "No Irish need apply;" and, besides, by arresting her nothing was to be gained, while, if there were anything in the suspicion, much might be gained by quietly letting her alone. One sounder I did make, but with rather dubious results. When the examination was over, I walked with Mr Brailey through the room in which the servants were still assembled, and said pointedly, as I did so—

"Do not fear, Mr Brailey. The thing has a mysterious look at present, but I have little doubt that the thief will be in our hands before long."

As I spoke I ran my eye carelessly over the group of concerned faces, and noticed that that of Bridget Qualey instantly changed to a more pallid hue; and at the same moment, strangely enough, I could see tears start into her eyes, as she turned hastily away.

"So! The girl is moved by the threat," I thought. "What does that mean? Is it the grief of innocence under suspicion, or is it guilt fearing punishment? a punishment that may fall on more than herself? I wish I knew. I must watch her at anyrate, and find out all I can about her and her connections."

This was my resolution as I took my leave, and upon it I immediately acted, using at the same time all the ordinary means towards the discovery of stolen property. But though a good deal of valuable time was lost in the pursuit, I had dis-

covered no more than that the girl had some connections of a very doubtful character in the Old Mint Close, when one forenoon I was astonished—absolutely fixed to my seat in open-mouthed wonderment—by receiving a visit from—Simon Penbank!

The shabby spy made his politest bow, returning my astounded look with a cheerful and affable smile; then he deliberately pulled off a pair of tattered gloves, carefully placed them within his remains of a hat, bowed again, and calmly accommodated himself with a seat. At the same time it did not escape me that he appeared brimful of that peculiar exultation which I had often before noticed glowing on his pimpled face when there was money in prospect, or information to be given.

"Well, what brings you here?" I demanded rather roughly, looking down on him with all the contempt and loathing which his presence invariably excited in my breast.

"Business!" he responded with a sweet smile, and quite undisturbed by my looks. "I look upon crime, my dear Jamie, with the eye of a philosopher. Its curiosities, its intricacies, its wonders, excite my intelligence, my intellect. I investigate, I explore, I study; I break open, so to speak, this nut, and behold! within lies a golden kernal—sterling coin of the realm!"

"My time is valuable," I shortly interrupted, impatiently rising from my seat, and about to ring for somebody to hustle him out to the open air.

"And so is my information," he said with wonderful quickness, as he saw my hand go to the bell. "Pause, pause, young man, while the aged philosopher imparts to you the fruit of his wisdom—his researches. For the past few days you have been ghost-ridden—haunted—by a clock, a silver clock, which has disappeared from a house in the West End, which has certainly been stolen, but which has as certainly neither been fenced, melted, nor hidden under the beneficent wings of that convenient relative, my Uncle."

"Ah! where did you hear about that?" I cried, forgetting his tedious jargon in the sudden interest his words had awakened.

"Not from the papers, for it has been carefully withheld from them, for reasons best known to yourself," he quickly replied. "Still, it came to my ears—how, it matters not. I have information of your clock which may not only lead to its

recovery, but to the conviction of the criminals as well. I have a first clue, as you would call it, which, if properly worked up by you with your accustomed energy and daring, would clear up the whole mystery and bring untold honours thickly down upon your head; but without this clue you can no more hope for success than a man attempting to spin ropes out of sand. To-night, to my certain knowledge, the clock is doomed to vanish. Say, then, how much is my information worth?"

I pondered for a few minutes, thoughtfully scanning the cunning face of the ferret before me the while, but at last I was forced to reluctantly reply—

"To me the information would be worth much; that is, it would put nothing in my pocket, but I would value it highly; to you, I fear, the information will bring nothing either. I am not empowered to buy the secret. I am not Hugh M'Indoe. Why did you not go to him?"

"Reluctantly I confess the truth," solemnly returned Penbank, laying his hand on his heart. "I have already visited that valued friend, but learn with regret that he is ill—too ill either to see me or attend to my business. But surely, if the gentleman who has been robbed places any value upon the article, he would stump down—pardon me for using a slang expression—something to a—a philosopher who leads the way to its recovery?"

I remained silent, watching his anxious face keenly for some moments. We were merely measuring weapons, but I was not disposed to show him the length of mine in a way that would expose my weakness.

"Had you nothing to do with the robbery yourself?" I curtly inquired.

"On my honour, no," was his fervid reply—"not the remotest connection with the robbery, as you will see if the case proceeds to a clearing up."

"Then, in that case, I may tell you that the gentleman has already signified his willingness to give five pounds reward for such information as shall lead to the recovery of the property and the conviction of the offenders, provided the informant be not one of the thieves himself. Will that satisfy you?"

"You would not entrust me with part payment—say one-half—in advance?" he dubiously inquired, after an interval of grave thought.

"Would I throw money into the sea and hope for a return?"

I scornfully answered. "No, I cannot possibly promise you a farthing till the clock and thieves are up here under lock and key. But if that does not suit you, why not distinguish yourself, and for once confer a benefit on society by yourself recovering the stolen property? I believe your reward would be none the less secure."

"It would—death, the reward of all weak fools who seek distinction," he replied, with an emphatic shake of the head. "I have weighty reasons for wishing rather to behold the energy of others in this case than to seek vainglory for myself. There is danger. I hate danger; brutal passionate men are my horror. My strength lies not in my arms, but in my tongue. They might kill me, and then what matter to me who got the wretched clock with its silver bells? I would be dead, and all its chimings or ingenious mechanism could not cause one little thrill in my dull ear, or one throb in my pulseless heart. Then, again, suppose that by some miracle of cunning I did escape, clock and all, who could even then assure me against dire results? Might I not be pounced upon as the thief? Worse still, might I myself not be tempted, and in a moment of weakness silence its silvery music for ever in the melting-pot. My dear Jamie, I am a philosopher, it is true; but, remember, I am still human, and still—a thief!"

"Well, well," I impatiently rejoined, "do you consent to tender the information on this understanding?"

"Reluctantly I am compelled to consent," he replied. "The information, as I have honestly admitted, is of no pecuniary value to me, and the principles upon which I have ever guided my small bark through this tempestuous world have taught me that, while a bird in the hand is worth two in a bush, yet a bird in a bush is better than no bird at all; so allow me to accept your word of honour and give you the details. Three persons were concerned in the robbery—Bridget Qualey; Pat M'Lauchlan, her sweetheart; and Tim Qualey, her brother. These two gentlemen, residing, as you are aware, near the foot of the Old Mint Close, partly by threats and partly by persuasion, forced the girl to hand over the clock to their care and keeping the night before it was missed—they supplying her with false keys wherewith to open the oaken case in which it was secured. How did I get all this information? Very simply. M'Lauchlan's father lay dying, and, as he refused to see a priest, I visited him. I sympathised with him. I consoled him to the best of my ability, and I ex-

tracted from him the cause of all his trouble and concern. My only regret is, that his knowledge of the singular crime was limited, woefully limited."

"What! and do you really sit there and tell me that, under the guise of sympathy with a dying man, you ferreted out all this information, intending, with diabolical coolness, to use it against his offspring?" I shouted, horrified in spite of myself.

"Such is indeed the case," he remarked with elation, "but do not praise me;" and he waved his hand with a deprecating smile of modesty—"suffice it for me to see the tongue of admiration lie paralysed before me—"

"Admiration! you infernal scoundrel!" I cried, in a burst of indignation. "I see little to prevent me from kicking you out to the street!"

"Don't—don't!" he cried, with a surfeited look. "I tell you I do not wish praise, and yet you heap it on as fast as breath can pour. Every one in this sublunary sphere has his peculiar ambition—mine, I need scarcely remark, has ever been to write after my name Comfortable Villain. My present success pleases me, but do not enervate me with praise."

I stared in a stupefied way at the rascal thus coolly setting down my abuse as praise, and then faintly got out—

"Well, tell me what you know, and then get you gone."

"That's just where I am puzzled," he frankly replied. "I know little more, except in a mythical form, which your skill must unravel. I did my best, as I have said, to soothe the old man in his last moments; he is now dead, and to be 'waked' to-night. The exact words which I have since overheard are these—'*After the wake, the clock will vanish in blue smoke.*' Do not ask me to explain the oracle, for I cannot. Another strange fact I may mention: the old man is not to be buried in this city—to-morrow forenoon the coffin is to be borne, as at a funeral, to the railway station, and thence conveyed to Glasgow. These are the facts; make what plans and plots out of them you please. One suggestion I may make, which it is possible you, who are held back by no considerations of personal safety, might be inclined to adopt: the three persons concerned in the robbery are all to be present at the wake; if you could contrive to be present you might overhear something to explain the mysterious vanishing of the clock after the wake."

With these words Simon Penbank rose, drew on his tattered gloves, carefully dusted his hat with the glazed cuff of his coat, placed the rim against his left breast to make his politest bow,

and then retired, leaving me deeply immersed in thought. I now knew enough to justify me in pouncing upon the whole of the thieves, lugging them up to the Office, and thoroughly searching the place; but much as my fingers itched to do it, my better judgment whispered that one result of the hasty proceeding might be to lose forever the valuable plunder. The fact that the clock's value lay not so much in the metal as in the workmanship, had as yet saved it from the melting-pot; but experience taught me that if I once alarmed the thieves, the whole would be mercilessly sacrificed to present safety. After an hour's thinking, and a long consultation with M'Sweeny, I got the dim outline of a plan into my head; and taking other two men with us, we got down to the house of the M'Lauchlan's, in Mint Close, and considerably alarmed and astonished the old woman by demanding to search the house. She treated us to a great amount of lively abuse, but submitted so readily to have the house searched, that I at once guessed that the clock at least was for the present further off. One man we left in the kitchen to see that she did not stir to pry into our peculiar arrangements, and then we held a close inspection of the room where the body lay, to try and discover, if possible, a hiding-place for one of our number. Here, however, a disappointment awaited us. The room was small, and bare almost to emptiness—having no bed, press, or other convenient hiding-place. The whole furniture indeed seemed to consist of two tables, placed close together at the dark end of the room, where the ceiling sloped towards the floor, upon which the body reposed, grim and still, covered with a white sheet, and a couple of forms, borrowed doubtless for the occasion, which ran along the sides of the room. Underneath the table stood the coffin, ready to receive the body as soon as the peculiar obsequies were completed.

"Begorra, we're done, Jamie!" said M'Sweeny, gazing bluntly around on the empty hovel. "There isn't a place to receive my iligant figure in all the room, barrin' the flure—if we had time to lift some of the boords, an' could do it widout the ould Judy in the next room hearin'."

I stared about, biting my nails with vexation, and at last said, dubiously—

"You couldn't hide in the coffin, I suppose?"

M'Sweeny started back with a shudder, and stared at me with a comical, half-affrighted expression creeping over his face.

"Blood alive, what d'ye think I'm made of?" he exclaimed at last. "No, 'twas bad enough to be shut up in the boxes, when we nailed Jim Maclusky, even with the power of holes we druv in them; but in that thing! No, I couldn't! Sure, I might fall asleep, and be screwed down quick, and suffocated an' berrit afore I knew where I was. A dead man may feel comfortable enough in there, but I'd die with fright afore I was in it ten minutes."

"Well, suppose we put the dead man into it, and you take his place under the sheet?" I quickly suggested in reply.

"That's better," he said, brightening up. "I've been a dead man before when you tried to ketch the body snatchers, and didn't do it, even wid me helpin' you, and I know what to do—you've only to lie out straight and not sneeze. Only when they come to *keen* over me, and lift the sheet off my face, and praise me for all my virtues, p'r'aps they may discover the chate?"

"They might, but it is not likely; this place is quite under the slope of the ceiling, and must be very dark however the room is lighted. But if they did, you would need to use your voice, for they would have little mercy."

"That's true; but I'll keep my staff in my hand, which I'll match agin all the shillelahs in Munster; and you can be ready close at hand and rush up when ye hear the whistle."

"Then, you're not afraid?"

"Afraid? divil a bit; it's not the first wake I've been at, and I never saw one that didn't end in broken heads. Ondly, of course, I myself was never waked before."

Very quickly we made our arrangements. M'Sweeney's red beard and hair were covered up in the best way possible, and then we lifted the body into the coffin, noting only one peculiar circumstance, that the coffin, whether by design or accident, had been made at least a foot too long. M'Sweeney was then stretched out on the two tables and covered up; and I went back to the kitchen to relieve the man I had left, while my companion in the room tramped noisily out at the door, to impress the old woman that two had gone before us. She threatened us volubly, but appeared much relieved when I told her that I had found no trace of either drink or shebeen-ing—a scheme of my own to lead her off the scent—and asked her to overlook the troublesome visit which we had been compelled to make in the execution of our duty. Then we left the house; and after a while got into a room on the opposite

side of the close, where we could get a glimpse of the proceedings in the garret where M'Sweeny now reposed on his hard bed.

Shortly after we had left, the old woman M'Lauchlan entered the room and lighted two candles ; then she was gone for some time, and at last re-appeared with some bottles and glasses, and a quantity of pipes and tobacco. By this time the guests had begun to arrive ; each one on entering going up to M'Sweeny's head and *keen*ing to his heart's content ; a sound to which I am not very partial, and which even M'Sweeny admitted he preferred to hear from the throat of a young girl rather than that of "an ould rasper, with a cracked voice that made the very hair of your head stand up." Much drinking, smoking, and talking followed ; but nothing of importance came to the ears of "the body" till the arrival of Pat M'Lauchlan, accompanied by his sweetheart, Bridget Qualey, and her brother Tim. Whether her own feelings got into the cry, I know not, but certainly the *keen* of this girl swelled out with a wild pathos and a musical cadence that must have thrilled all present. Presently the hush that followed the entrance of the three again merged into a noisy hum, and then M'Sweeny could hear the three talking in low, earnest tones close to his resting-place. The girl was sobbing quietly, and Pat, her sweetheart, was trying his best to comfort and reassure her.

"Sure, thirty pounds isn't to be picked up every day," he said, "and the Glasgow fence will pay me that down, every penny, and all the expense of taking through the body as well, the moment I put the clock safe in his hands. Then it'll be sent out of the country, where never one of the police or anybody else will ever see or hear tell of it more. Then, Bridget, we'll get married, and ye won't regret any longer having helped yer husband and yer brother."

"Yes, but the sin, the cruelty of the robbery," persisted the poor girl, with a weary sigh. "I would rather have run into the first shop and lifted twice the value than have betrayed such a trust. Oh, wirra, wirra ! but a judgment will come upon us, and I wouldn't wonder to see your father rise in his shroud when you defile his coffin with the plunder that he groaned against with his last breath. Oh, why did I ever yield to your soft words, and commit such a great sin?"

More conversation followed in the same strain, and then the speakers were lost among the general revelry waxing louder and louder on every side. When this had gone on for some hours,

M'Sweeney, who had ventured in the din to give a slight cough to relieve a tickling in his throat, was suddenly frozen into rigidity by hearing a drunken voice say—

“As there's a God above us, I swear I saw the corpse move!”

A general hush followed the words, and some of the guests instantly backed for the door, including the man who had spoken.

“Ugh! what are ye but a pack of cowards and fools?” growled out Pat M'Lauchlan, in the midst of a dead silence; “sure, the dead can't rise.”

“No; where's the poker, and I'll show ye that!” shrilly screamed the old woman, who was now maddened with drink. “If he's not dead, I'll give it him for decaving us!”

M'Sweeney heard the words, the grasping of the poker, and the defiant stagger across the floor towards his resting-place. It was do or die with him, and, choosing rather to fall in a fair fight than have his legs perhaps broken across with a poker, he suddenly started bolt upright on the tables, and began struggling to disengage himself from his white wrappings.

The effect was instantaneous. With one great yell of horror men and women threw up their hands and rushed for the door, fighting over each other, scrambling, kicking, and trampling in mad fury to escape the dreaded presence. With a great crash the door suddenly yielded, and the whole company went tumbling down the stair in a mass, shrieking, yelling, and screaming as if all hell had been let loose.

The moment after, M'Sweeney got himself free, jumped down on the floor, and was not a little surprised to find himself alone.

“There's more run from me dead than ever ran from me living,” was his philosophic comment, as he rubbed his cramped limbs and danced about to quicken the circulation. “Howsoever, I'm glad I didn't get their iligant poker over me legs. What's this?—whisky. It's not the best, but it would be a pity to let it go to waste, and a dead man deserves something to warm him,” and he took a long steady pull at the bottle, and then turned to the coffin under the table. “Come out of that an' take yer own place, ye ould spalpeen,” he said, addressing the corpse, and replacing it under the sheet; “ye're more able to bear it than me; more by token I've got all the news I want, and Jamie will be getting onaisy. Just another drop afore I go. Your very good health, ould boy—there's not many of us,

but such as we are, we're very select ;" and with these words he drained the bottle, lighted his pipe, and, slipping down the stair, found the coast clear, and speedily joined me in the opposite house.

Shortly after, while we were consulting what course to pursue, the scattered guests came creeping back into the close, and at last gathered in an excited, gabbling knot at the foot of the stair. Early as was the hour, a considerable crowd soon gathered ; and among these there were not wanting many who set the whole down as a delusion, and the excited declaimers as—drunk ! At last, primed with an offer of drink, two of these sceptical strangers were induced to ascend to the deserted room, when, to the surprise of every one, they very soon announced that the man was lying stretched on the table under the sheet, "as dead as ever he was." A rush of the company up the stair followed, and then a new surprise and mystery awaited them : in their absence it appeared that the dead man had consumed every drop of drink in the house ! Many a hearty curse and vile recrimination was heaped upon the senseless form, and many a fist was rudely shaken at the calm still features ; and shortly after the company broke up, still unable to solve the mystery.

Next day, early in the forenoon, a funeral procession left the house and slowly wended its way down to the Waverley Station. Nothing could exceed the decorum of the bearers ; and, indeed, knowing what I do of the kindness and sympathy of the Irish for the suffering and bereaved, I must say that upon this occasion one of the noblest traits in their character was grossly outraged, for it turned out that not one in the procession except M'Lauchlan and Qualey dreamt that they carried aught but the dead man.

To avoid undue commotion, we allowed the procession to get within the station, and then quietly displayed our little staffs of authority and stopped it in the Queen's name. Unmoved by commotion, excitement, or threats, we collared the two thieves, secured the coffin, and had the whole carefully conveyed to the Office. There, with hands shaking with eagerness and excitement, I myself undid the screws of the coffin—and there, at the foot of the corpse, carefully packed in wadding, was the silver clock !

M'Lauchlan and Qualey each got seven years—the girl Bridget, at my earnest solicitation, giving evidence against them, and thus escaping any punishment but the stings of her

own conscience, which from her own confession and her appearance at the trial, I could judge were sufficiently keen. She got off to America somehow, and there, I hope, began a new and better life. Simon Penbank, who so prided himself on his duplicity, insensibility, and villany, duly received the five pounds; but that even he was deceived in thinking himself utterly callous, I may try to show in noticing him again further on.

A FALSE WILL.

ONE hot day in the month of August, George Pinkerton, a needy gentleman, aged forty-six, and having no fixed employment, arrived in Edinburgh from Glasgow, and put up at a cheap hotel in the High Street. He was accompanied by a woman whom we cannot, even by the widest-stretched courtesy, call his wife, by name Janet Clinch. Both had a repulsive and crime-hardened appearance, and there was even a faint resemblance in features between them, so that one of the servants in the hotel remarked—"If they hadn't come as man and wife, I'd have taken them for brother and sister," a mistake which more than the simple servant were to fall into before long.

After a comfortable little dinner had been served and despatched, Pinkerton paid the bill, engaged the room in which they were sitting "for a day or two, just till they looked about them a little," and called for brandy, hot water, and tumblers. These being brought in, he carefully closed the door after the waiter, reseated himself at the table, brewed punch for two; and then, when he had helped himself and his companion, and leant back exultingly in his chair, something like the following conversation ensued—

"You cannot see how I am to get my daft sister Margaret to execute another will, and that in my favour, without knowing of it? I'm glad you cannot, for that is just where my plan comes in. If every one else is as thick-headed as you, my success is complete."

"But there is already a legal will in existence," persisted his companion. "Nothing could overturn it, for it was executed long before your sister took these occasional mad fits."

"Very true," replied Pinkerton, setting down his glass with an emphatic thud, and with a trace of a dark scowl on his face; "the whole, in the event of her death, would go beyond dispute to this chit of a girl Mary Banks, who has stuck to her through thick and thin—mad fits and all. But suppose I get another will executed at the present date, legally signed and

witnessed, and suppose that the existence of that will remain unsuspected till her death, then I walk into possession of the whole, which cannot be less than £1200 a-year."

"Do you mean a forged will? and is that the reason why you have caused me to practise an imitation of your sister's signature for so long?" curiously asked the woman, sipping at the brandy-punch, and speaking with the utmost coolness.

"You have asked that a dozen times, and again I answer, 'No,'" replied Pinkerton, with a cunning leer. "Forgery is a vulgar word, and would not describe my plan in one quarter of its details. The will shall be a forgery, but so exact and correct in every circumstance attending its execution that the deepest or cleverest lawyers in Christendom cannot upset it. Now, listen. My sister lives in a miserly half-flat over in Queen Street, with only two servants—this girl Mary Banks, and a blinking old fool of a housekeeper. Well, in the first place, to be master of the situation, I must have the girl got out of the way, and to allow of this my sister must take one of her mad fits."

"How *must* take one?"

"Simply that I will frighten her into taking one," answered Pinkerton, chuckling heartily, as if the frightening of sisters into madness were to him one of the most agreeable of occupations. "She hates and fears me ever since I relieved her of some superfluous money. It could not be called robbery, for it is quite preposterous that a brother should want while his sister rolls in wealth."

"But if you make her mad, will not the will executed at such a time be illegal?"

"Exactly; but my sister shall be mad to some and sane to others. I will take good care that the will shall appear to be executed by a sane woman, and that without undue influence being exercised. In fact, I have the will in my pocket, carefully and concisely drawn up, leaving all to myself, and rescinding and annulling all previous wills, and wanting only the signatures to be a legal document."

"Then why not simply forge the signatures, and then frighten her to death in some way, and pounce upon the property at once?" suggested the woman.

Pinkerton smiled pityingly.

"That would be a woman's way—the law of claws," he answered. "No; there must be no crime, no force, no proceeding that will not bear the strictest scrutiny. I have my

plan made up, and that I will try and no other. If I fail, there is no risk, for Margaret is so soft-hearted that she will not prosecute her own brother—a point upon which I have already tested her. I do not mean to trouble you with details; I only say, Obey me, and we will be rich. She is already on the fidget, and to make her nervous is to prepare her for a mad fit. I wrote from Glasgow inviting myself on a friendly visit to her house; by return of post I received a polite but frigid note declining the honour of my company, and written unmistakably by the girl Banks. Back I wrote that I *would* come in spite of her; and thus the matter stands.”

He rose as he spoke, dusted the crumbs from his knees, and prepared to go out. While he combed up the grey hairs to cover his bald pate, the woman sat meditating darkly.

“You’re going to see her now?” she said at last.

“I am.”

“Do I go with you?”

“Not at present.”

“Is there any danger in the thing—I mean, danger to me?”

The answer came slowly and with some hesitation—

“Not that I know of; not if you implicitly obey me.”

“Well, be sure of that before you start,” sharply returned the woman. “If anything serious turns up, I’ll turn round in a moment, and peach to save myself.”

“Poh! would you rather inhabit a prison than your own villa, with one thousand two hundred a-year at the back of it?” sneered the other. “No! the money is mine by right, and I will have it, at whatever risk.”

“Yes; but you keep me so much in the dark as to your plans,” rejoined the woman, in a discontented tone.

“That is only because I am in the dark myself as yet,” he quickly returned. “I must see how the first steps work before I know what is to follow. In a day or two, at most, you will be perfect in the part you have to play.”

At the time that this conversation was taking place in the Old Town, a very different one, but hinging on the same subject, was going on over in Queen Street Gardens. The speakers were an old lady, very frail and apparently ague-stricken, and a young bright-faced girl of twenty or so, upon whose arm she leant for support. The first was Miss Margaret Pinkerton, aged fifty, but in appearance much older, and the second was her maid Mary Banks, a girl whom she had

adopted and educated. They had turned into the gardens for an airing, but the excitement and nervous weakness of the lady had forced them to turn and make for the nearest gate, with the intention of returning to their home in the long row of houses opposite.

"Ah, Mary, I often wish that I had been born penniless, and been brought up at a charity school like yourself," tearfully remarked the lady in one of their pauses to rest and breathe. "What happiness does money bring to me? None. It is the curse of my life, the cloud that darkens all. Every one but yourself is grasping to get at it, and wishing the breath out of my body that they may fight for it. That letter from the audacious thief, my brother George, has completely upset me; I have a feeling of coming misfortune. O God, I hope it is not another *illness*!"

Mary shuddered and paled, and clung closer to her benefactress.

"Don't think of it, ma'am," she eagerly whispered, "or of him, or the money, or of anything but how you can make yourself and others happy. I'm glad I am not rich; and as for you leaving the money to me, if I thought that it were to make me unhappy, and fearful, and restless, and ill, why, I would take it and throw it into the sea!"

"But I have left it to you—sure and firm—according to the opinion of the most eminent lawyers," replied the lady. "The will was made long before I became subject to these unfortunate attacks, and is quite beyond disputing—even by a scoundrel like my brother," and the last words came out with determined vehemence.

"Ah! that's it," sadly responded the girl. "It's that I'm sorry for."

"Sorry?" sternly echoed the lady. "Are you sorry for a thief who has robbed and swindled me in every possible way?"

"No, not for him, but for the evil effect which springs back upon yourself," quickly returned the girl. "It is wearing out your life. Oh, ma'am, if you wouldn't think it bold or foolish, I think I know a plan which would bring you happiness, and rid you of him and his wicked importunities for ever."

"Ah! let me hear the plan."

"Well, it's very simple," continued the girl, with a beaming look: "just give him all the money at once, and have done with it. He will never trouble you when he knows you have nothing, and we could live happily together ever after."

"And reduce myself and you to beggary!" cried the lady, with an incredulous smile. "Is it possible, you young, unselfish simpleton, that you can actually propose such a thing in seriousness?"

"No, not to beggary; I have thought of that," quickly returned the girl. "Though a lady, you do not live as such. Your habits are simple, and your wants few. When Harry returns from this voyage, he will be first mate no longer, but take rank as captain, and have a vessel of his own. Then he will—will perhaps—at least, I think, he will want to marry me;" and Mary blushed furiously as she stammered out the words. "You could then live with us; not as a dependant or a guest, but as my own dear mother, for such you have truly been to me from my earliest childhood."

The lady's eyes glistened at the unselfish proposal thus earnestly put forth till they fairly filled with tears.

"You poor unselfish fool, do you think I could ever consent to such a sacrifice?" she cried, as soon as she could find voice.

"I am not poor," simply returned the girl; "I have Harry's love and devotion; with that I can fight through the world in perfect confidence, and he can work for all we both need. After all, one cannot eat more than their share in the world, and if all your money were put in my lap, I believe I should feel inclined to hand it over to your brother, after all."

"But you cannot—you cannot!" feverishly broke in the lady. "It is willed to you in that way, and on that condition. It either goes to you entirely, or to public charities—remember that—your oath will be required on the point when the time comes."

"Then I hope the time will never come. I don't want the money or the conditions. I would willingly give the whole to see you well and happy."

"Ah, that I do believe, but I fear it will never be," sighed the lady.

There was a silence of some minutes' duration, during which they turned out of the gardens, crossed the street, and were about to move off at the same slow pace, when a flashily dressed man turned the corner of Hanover Street and stood directly before them. Both lady and maid started. The man was George Pinkerton.

"I told you I should come," he remarked, with a gleam of his teeth meant for a smile. "I trust you have considered my

proposal, Margaret, and been convinced that you have treated me cruelly and unjustly !”

The lady, to the surprise of her maid, trembled no longer, but instantly appeared to rise, calm and majestic, into a semblance of her former self.

“Leave me, Mary; walk on to the house before me,” she said with dignity, quitting her maid’s arm and walking firmly without support. “I will speak to this man alone.”

Mary reluctantly obeyed, and in another moment they were walking alone—the lady having refused her brother’s proffered arm with a shudder, which even he could not misunderstand.

“I am glad you have sent away the girl; it has saved me the trouble of ordering you to do it,” he said, with firm emphasis, looking his sister full in the face with a steady and malignant ferocity which made her quail in spite of herself.

“Order, sir?” she haughtily echoed; “I am quite capable of the task myself.”

“Perhaps,” he said drily, and with a spiteful emphasis which fully bore out his meaning. “I don’t know what the law would say upon the point. Perhaps it would decide that you are sane—perhaps not.”

“It has already decided that I was sane when I made my will,” defiantly and hotly retorted the lady; “and that, I presume, is all that concerns you.”

“Now there you are wrong,” was the cool and steady reply. “I am aware that your money has gone past me to that sneak of a girl. It was not that which brought me here. Can you guess what did?”

“It does not concern me sufficiently to induce me to try,” coldly returned the lady, with a calm exterior over a fast-beating heart.

“Then I’ll tell you!” he cried, with a sharp, low hiss. “It was to kill you—cut your throat—send you to your grave!”

The lady started now, and slowly whitened to the roots of the hair. Yet no one passing and studying the two faces could have guessed that such deadly words were passing between them; for the gentleman was smiling as daintily as if he had been offering her a fortune, and she, in spite of her pallor, still bravely struggled to keep up a contemptuous smile.

“Yes; I mean to break into that bedroom of yours, on the first flat along there, some night while you sleep, and only allow you to wake that you may have the pleasure of knowing and feeling that it is your brother’s hands and fingers that are

strangling you!" he pursued, gracefully offering his arm, which was again refused with loathing.

"You threaten bravely a defenceless old woman," faintly gasped the horrified lady. "You forget that the whole world hoots such a crime, and the law *hangs* for it."

"Wrong again, sister dear," smilingly returned the villain; "I rather wish to be hanged than otherwise. It will be the first in the family, and you know it is better to be hanged than live as a gentleman without money."

The lady's face was now stony white and rigid with horror.

"I fear much that you are going to faint, sister dear, or go mad, or something," he sweetly remarked. "Now, I hate scenes, especially on the open street; shall I call a cab, or will you take my arm?"

"I will not take your arm, villain!—scoundrel!" burst forth the lady, tottering with fright, but still resolute. "What prevents me from giving you in charge for attempting to extort money?"

"Ah! what, indeed?" he pathetically echoed. "I do not know, though I have tried hard to understand. But it is a fact, nevertheless; I am your brother, and you cannot do it," and a triumphant smile greeted her groan of anguish.

"What do you wish?" she wildly demanded at last, not relenting, but simply faint with fear.

"Merely that you should put away that girl, who, I can prove, is exercising 'undue influence' upon you for a selfish purpose, and take me, your affectionate brother, once more into your confidence, and provide for me as a gentleman."

"Never! never!—that is my answer, final and irrevocable!" cried the lady. "Leave me, now, for you shall not extort from me another shilling."

"A shilling!" he echoed; "not worth picking off the street—a mere drop in the ocean. No!" and he put his evil-like face close to hers till his eyes appeared to search into her very soul. "I seek not a shilling but a fortune, and I shall have it! Mark the word—shall! You will go mad—I can see it in your eyes now—and then I can manage things in my own way. There shall be no more nursing at home by this chit of a girl; I am your legal guardian, and will do things in business-like style. I will put you in a mad-house—think of that!—a home among murderous maniacs and drivelling idiots, from which you may never escape but in your coffin! Ha! sister dear, that touches you! you wince and stagger at last. Just as I

had expected—she has fainted!” he gloatingly added, hailing a cab, as he caught her sinking form. “Now, if she doesn’t take a fit after that, I will never again call myself clever.”

The jolting of the cab appeared to rouse her a little, for on reaching the house she was able to struggle up the few steps, weakly grasping at the iron railing. At the door Mary received them, and paled as she noted the wandering, fearful looks of her mistress. Pinkerton did not attempt to enter, or intrude in any way.

“I have brought you your mistress,” he simply remarked, with his gleaming smile. “I fear much that she is going mad; it is in the family, you know; though when it began with her is a point for the lawyers. I believe there is a sixpence or a shilling or something due to the cabman, which you can pay. I will call on my sweetest to-morrow, and see how she progresses. Good afternoon;” and raising his hat like the finest gentleman in the land, the specious scoundrel took himself away.

The door was closed, and the lady’s arms closed nervelessly on the strong shoulder of her maid; and thus she was half carried to her own room. But though Mary was weeping silently, not a tear came from the lady’s eyes. She submitted passively to have herself undressed—merely wringing her hands in a woeful tearless way when she found them free—and then, in reply to an oft-repeated question of her maid, she groaned out—

“Yes, I feel that I am to be ill; there is something hanging over me. Is it a cloud, or a hateful enemy, or a forgotten word? Ah! that is it; it is something that I cannot remember?”

Mary wept more bitterly than before, and put her arms about her benefactress in a tight embrace.

“Oh, do not think of it!” she imploringly breathed. “Forget everything, try to sleep, and I will watch you.”

“Ay, do so,” said the lady, with sudden energy. “Do not let *him* come near me; I fear he will take me away. But what was it that I could not remember? Everything gets hazy and indistinct; and who is that before me?”

“It is I—Mary,” ejaculated the weeping girl. “Alas! the mischief is almost done,” she added to herself. “Would that I had never left her with him!”

The poor lady sat in her night-dress, still wringing her hands softly, but refusing to stir.

“No, you wish to take me away, all to get the cursed

money," she wearily said. "Hush ! what was it that I wished to remember ? Ah ! at last, I have it,—

"Tell me, ye wingèd winds, that round my pathway roar,
Know ye some blissful spot where mortals weep no more?
Some lone and pleasant dell, some valley in the west,
Where, free from toil and pain, the weary soul may rest?
The loud wind dwindled to a whisper low,
And sighed for pity as it answered, 'No.'"

"Alas, the old trouble is on her now !" cried Mary, wringing her hands, as the words were wailed out with touching eloquence by the afflicted lady ; "she never repeats these lines but when the cloud is upon her. Oh, for a law to punish the scoundrel who has brought it back !"

"Hush ! hush !" fearfully whispered the lady, gripping her hard by the arm, and interrupting her words. "It is the mighty deep—the voice of the cruel ocean—hush !—

"Tell me, thou mighty deep, whose billows round me play,
Know'st thou some favoured spot, some island far away,
Where weary man may find the bliss for which he sighs,
Where sorrow never lives, and friendship never dies?
The wild waves, rushing in perpetual flow,
Paused for a while, then hoarsely answered 'No.'"

"Will you not retire to rest now, ma'am ?" pleaded Mary, with a touch on her mistress's arm.

"Not till the moon is up, sweetest," answered the lady, looking up with a bright smile, which made her wandering gaze look more woeful than her former melancholy drooping. Then the smile faded—her eyes filled with tears, and she slowly repeated—

"And thou, serenest moon, that with such lovely face,
Look'st down upon the earth, asleep in night's embrace,
Tell me, in all thy round, hast thou not known some spot
Where miserable man may find a happier lot?
Behind a cloud the moon withdrew in woe,
And with a voice, sweet but sad, responded, 'No.'"

"Ah, I am poor now—robbed of every penny !" wailed the afflicted lady. "There is nothing for me but a pauper's cell and a pauper's grave. I wonder if my brother ever thinks of me, rolling about the world, squandering my fortune, while I pine out my life here as a pauper. He said he would do it ; oh ! why did I defy his power ?"

Thus she maundered on through the night, while Mary and

the old housekeeper, Jenny, watched her by turns, and gave her the medicine constantly kept in the house for emergencies of the kind. There was really nothing dangerous about her madness. All her ravings were of a rather resigned and plaintive cast, as they had found before; and from a peculiar sensitiveness on the point, she had warned them never to call in a medical man in the event of her being "taken ill," unless the case were really urgent. Before noon next day, however, a new lawgiver appeared on the scene in the person of her brother, George Pinkerton. The two women would have kept him out, but he resolutely pushed his way in, threatening them volubly with the terrors of the law; and thus he made his way into the room of the afflicted lady, breaking out into a smile of triumph when he found her quite beyond recognising him.

"She is mad," he said coolly. "I told you last night that the fit was coming on. I will have in two of the best medical men in town to consult as to her condition. No remonstrance—no words now, or I shall pack you both to the door! I am master here till the recovery of your mistress. And let me warn you, girl, that you are acting directly against your own interests; for if it come to be known that you kept me from having free access to your mistress, a plea of undue influence would be brought forward, the will annulled, and the money lost to you for ever."

"Lost to me?" indignantly replied the noble girl, with a flashing look. "I do not want it; you are welcome to every coin of it, if you only cease persecuting my dear benefactress."

"Fine sentiment; nothing more," quietly sneered the gentleman. "Why, then, do you hang so persistently about her skirts? Why are you afraid to leave her side while I am about?"

"Because I love her," was the choking answer. "And because I fear you."

"Yes, fear that I might induce her to make another will; I understand you perfectly," he remarked with a nod, wilfully affecting ignorance of her real meaning.

"I do not fear the making of another will; I have tried hard to induce her to do it, if only for her own sake, that she might live in safety and peace," burst forth the girl with an indignant eloquence that made him inwardly cower.

"Will you prove it?" he eagerly cried, throwing off every mask.

"I will!"

"Then leave her with me and the old housekeeper for a week. This fit of hers will probably not last many hours, and then I will have an opportunity of setting my character before her in its true colours, and of removing the prejudices which it has been your study to foster."

He watched eagerly for the effect of the taunting proposal, and waited tremblingly for the answer upon which so much of his plan depended. He saw the cloud of indecision flit across her face, and the tears of anxiety creep into her eyes as her gaze wandered to the vacant face of the afflicted lady; but before any words came from her lips, the lady's eyes were raised pitifully to her face. Then, as if to prompt her to an answer, the invalid softly wrung her hands and wailed forth—

"The wild waves rushing in perpetual flow,
Paused for a while, then hoarsely answered, 'No!'"

"I thought you would shrink from a real test," sneered the gentleman.

"I do not shrink," fearlessly returned the girl. "I will go. I will leave her for a week, and if in that time you can induce her to frame a will in your favour, none will rejoice more than myself. But, beware! do but injure her in thought or deed, and I will hunt you down for it—ay, even to a prison. I love her, not her money, so beware what you try. I am not without friends, and there is one who will be here before a week is gone, who will scrutinise keenly your every movement and act towards my benefactress."

"Some sweetheart, I'll swear!" he returned, trying not to shrink under her flashing eyes.

"It matters not; I have warned you," she rejoined, too excited and concerned for the lady to see the intention of the thrust, or give way to blushes or confusion. "As you act kindly and justly by her, so shall you be dealt with."

She was out—with one embrace of her friend, and one flashing look at her enemy—and in ten minutes had left the house.

No sooner was she gone than, leaving the invalid in charge of the old housekeeper, Pinkerton left the house, and very soon found two medical men willing to call upon his sister and pronounce as to her mental state. In less than an hour they were closeted with him and the patient, and had no hesitation, upon his statements and examination of the lady, in signing an order for her removal, if necessary, to an asylum.

"I trust it will not come to that," said the deep scoundrel,

with hypocritical pathos, "but I would like to have the power by me in case of an emergency."

Now, here comes the most intricate and mystifying part of the whole affair. After the departure of the medical men he appeared in a fidget to get rid of the housekeeper, if only for an hour, and at last managed to send the old body—who was rather stupid and bleary-eyed—over to the south side upon an errand which kept her away for fully two hours. In her absence, or at least about the time that it afterwards appeared that she was absent, some neighbours averred that a cab containing two strange, harsh-looking women, drove up to the stair; that the women descended; were admitted to a door on the first flat, and shortly afterwards re-appeared, assisting a shawled figure down the steps and into the cab, and then drove off.

Yet when Jenny returned and again visited the sick-room, her mistress—or, at least, *somebody*—lay in the bed just as before, only the invalid now lay far back in bed, shaded and screened from the strong light by the thick curtains; in addition to which the half of the window-shutter was closed, making the room gloomy and dark, and faces not so readily discernible, even had the housekeeper been blessed with good eyesight. The news with which she was now greeted were cheering in the extreme.

"Your mistress is quite sensible now, but very weak. She imagines, however, that she is sinking towards the grave, and wishes to see a medical man, a perfect stranger, if possible, that he may judge and testify, if necessary, that she is in her sound mind and capable of acting for herself."

"She doesna mean to mak' a new will, does she?" sharply asked the old woman, blinking at the new master suspiciously.

"I cannot say," pathetically sighed the deep villain; "but whatever her dying wishes may be, they must be obeyed and respected. Will you run for the doctor?"

"Will ane o' them dae that was here the day already?" asked Jenny simply, tugging on her bonnet again.

"No, no!—not for worlds!" he hastily exclaimed with a look of alarm. "Go over to the Old Town somewhere—anywhere that you can get a man with a good name, and who, you are sure, is not known to her, or her to him. You see," he lamely added, "a perfect stranger is less likely to be prejudiced, and the matter is important."

The old woman thought the mission strange, and his manner

strange, and his statements unsatisfactory and confusing ; but, not being blessed with the brightest intellect in the world, she said to herself that it was doubtless all right, and left the house to find the required medical man. Dusky twilight was creeping over the houses when she again appeared at her mistress's home in Queen Street, and this time she came whirling in the carriage of a medical man, whom she had caught just entering his home, and dismissing the carriage for the day. He was a well-known and highly respectable practitioner, whom I may call Dr Wilkie ; and gave up his long-awaited-for dinner without a sigh whenever he heard the housekeeper's story.

They were admitted by Pinkerton, who without ceremony motioned Jenny to her "proper place, the kitchen," while he led the doctor alone towards the sick chamber.

"It is nothing alarming, I think," said Pinkerton, as they entered the room, "only her old trouble, disease of the heart; she has had it from childhood."

The doctor bowed and turned to the patient, and after a brief examination and a few questions decided, first, that the woman before him was really troubled with heart disease; second, that she was at the moment labouring under great excitement; and thirdly, that, as far as he could judge, she was in no immediate danger from the present attack. These three points are worth noting, for, singularly enough, and notwithstanding all that has been written about the stupidity and rashness of medical men, the whole were afterwards found correct and true. It was, indeed, a keen-sighted analysis of the case, quite surprising under the circumstances. Without calling for a light, then, Dr Wilkie quickly wrote out a prescription, and after recommending quiet and repose to the patient, with a few other general directions, he was about to leave, with the voluble thanks of the gentleman who had sent for him, when a few faintly spoken words from the patient drew him back to the chair by the bedside.

"This is my brother, doctor, the only relation I have in the world," said the patient, indicating Pinkerton with a motion of the hand, which had to pass for an introduction.

"So I believe," politely responded the doctor, with an inclination of the head; "your housekeeper has already informed me of the relationship;" and then he faintly wondered what was coming next, and what this fact had to with her case, or himself, her medical adviser.

"I have sent for you for a double purpose," continued the

patient in low tones. "Oh, doctor! I find that I have been surrounded with designing, artful people, who have served me merely in the hope of being remembered in my will. They have kept me and my poor brother here apart for years, and so skilfully maligned him in my presence that I could never be induced to see him. Then, when he did find means to have a moment's conversation with me, fearing that I was about to alter my will in his favour—which was actually the case—they raised reports that my reason was affected, that I was insane, and incapable of acting for myself."

"Very cruel, but not at all uncommon," soothingly observed the doctor, seeing her pause, as if expecting him to speak.

"Yes, but how can a sick woman controvert such malice?" quickly returned the patient. "A passing delirium, such as I have had at times, can surely not be called insanity; and yet, if I were taken suddenly away and a new will produced, it might be disputed, even though he is my only brother, and I have not another friend in the world."

"Then the best plan would be to set the question beyond dispute," answered the unsuspecting doctor. "Get some one of skill and experience to test you."

"Ah, doctor, you have just taken the words out of my mouth," eagerly returned the patient. "I wish *you* to test that—to question me upon any subject, converse on any difficult point, and see whether I am not sane—what you learned men call *compos mentis*—and capable of executing a will which even the most selfish and malignant dare not dispute when I am lying in the churchyard."

The doctor hesitated and fidgeted. He was not a disobliging man; but he had a horror of being mixed up in family squabbles, law disputes, or suspicious transactions of any kind.

"I am rich, and willing and able to pay any fee, however large," temptingly added the patient, noting the clouded look.

"You mistake me—wrong me, madam," hastily replied the medical man. "It is not the fee, or anything regarding money or payment which causes me to shrink. I merely do not wish to be mixed up in any law dispute; it is a thing to which I have a peculiar dislike."

"I am glad to hear it; you echo my own thoughts and feelings on the point," returned the patient, quite undisturbed.

"But, in the present case, I rejoice to think that no dispute

will arise. The only person likely to lose by a new will being framed has already stated her wish that it should be so arranged—that my all should go to my brother.”

“Then, why did you speak of an expected dispute?” very logically answered the doctor.

“Simply because words are one thing and actions another,” readily replied the patient. “You must have found it so often in your own experience. This artful girl who has kept us so long estranged *may* mean what she says and she may not. I merely wish to secure my brother against every possible contingency.

This seemed so reasonable, and altogether the patient had given such evidence of acuteness and intelligence in every word she had uttered, that Dr Wilkie unconsciously felt his scruples melting away. Another remark from the patient, however, decided him.

“I do not mean to make a final settlement, however, of my affairs till I am quite well, as I hope to be soon,” she said. “But in case anything happen, I have here a will, short and concise, which I myself have scrawled out. It simply leaves all I have to my brother, and before I sign it in presence of two witnesses, I would have you to test my sanity in every possible way.”

The doctor was interested now. He read over the will she spoke of. It was perfect, intelligible, and well expressed. He questioned her in every way, bringing out knotty points, and strange subjects requiring the closest reasoning for lucid replies, and then an animated conversation sprang up, in which Pinkerton himself occasionally joined, and at the end of half an hour, when a dim blink of light had been procured, Dr Wilkie had no hesitation in affirming his conviction that his patient was perfectly sound in intellect, and justified in executing the will proposed. This being satisfactorily arranged, the light was turned back so as to shade the patient ~~into the~~ deep gloom of the curtains; Jenny, the housekeeper, was brought in; and then the signing of the will took place. First, of course, the paper was read aloud, and handed to the patient to receive her signature. Jenny, blind and bleared though she was, *saw* it signed—that is, she saw a pair of woman’s hands take the paper and affix a name to it; but the faintest suspicion that the hands did not belong to her mistress appears never to have crossed her mind. Then came the witnessing; the doctor put his signature down bold and firm; Jenny added

hers with a shaking hand ; a blotting book was patted over the wet paper, and the false will was complete.

"Well, what are you standing there snivelling for?" snappishly inquired Pinkerton of the old housekeeper, as she lingered in the room wiping the tears from her eyes, while he folded and pocketed the will.

"Because I have heard that the makin' o' a wull bodes the funeral o' the maker," sobbed the faithful old servant. "If it sud be sae, I'll wish the hand had been rotted aff my arm afore I put my name till't."

"So will I, with all my heart," said the gentlemanly villain, with a curious gleam in his eye, and gently shoving her from the room. "But my sister may live for many a year yet, to reward you for your faithful services and good wishes."

This was all that took place in the doctor's presence and hearing. He took leave, assuring Pinkerton that the attack of his sister was but a slight one, and requesting that if she did not improve he might be at once sent for. As soon as he was gone, what was the astonishment of the old servant—after Pinkerton's recent kind words and promises—to hear him sternly order her to pack up her things and leave the house, as his sister required her services no longer, having engaged an experienced nurse to wait upon her!

Utterly petrified by the news, and with the money given her for wages and in lieu of warning in her hand, the old woman left the house to make some arrangement with her friends in the city before lifting her things; and no sooner was she in turn out of the way than the sick woman remained sick no longer, but springing out of bed and hastily dressing in some shabby apparel taken by Pinkerton from its hiding-place under the bed, she stood revealed as his evil-like companion Janet Clinch!

"Now!" she said, with fierce decision, turning full upon her companion, "I will tell you why I insisted upon the old woman being sent away. Your plan does not go far enough; I have another which goes farther. You have a bit of paper in your pocket which is utterly worthless to you at present, and which may be laid bare as an impudent imposture at any moment, and that long before you could realise a penny of the money it promises. Suppose you realise it at once?"

"How? how?"

"Simply by letting me, as your sister, die and be buried; at the same time, as your sister's nurse, I may live to help you

to prove the will, realise the property, sell out, and fly the country before your sister recovers, and the fraud can be discovered."

The very boldness of the plan, and the promptness with which it was laid before him, staggered the scheming villain, and made him sit staring vacantly in the woman's face, with drops of sweat slowly oozing from his temples.

"If we were discovered?" he faintly gasped.

"If?—don't say 'if,'" replied the woman, with a hard laugh. "We are certain to be discovered, but not before we are safely out of the way with the plunder in our pockets. Your sister is not likely to recover for some weeks, and, even if she did, it is to the interest of the proprietor of the asylum to keep her longer, fearing a relapse, and the loss of a good paying inmate. Bah! who would have thought you so chicken-hearted? Hesitate now, and we are lost."

"Do you know what your scheme involves?" he fearfully persisted, still hesitating. "It involves a deliberate forgery; a certificate of death, without which the sham burial could not take place."

"Would that fool of a doctor not give it without asking questions?"

"He dare not; he is bound by law to see and examine the body; and I dare not ask it. No, there would be nothing for it but a forged certificate."

"Well, what of that? we have done worse already," quickly returned the woman. "I have forged her name, and we have both connived at a false impersonation. What does it matter now how many forgeries we commit? We could be punished only once for them all."

This thieves' logic, old as the hills, found a ready echo in the breast of the quaking criminal. He objected no longer, but set about preparing the necessary papers; while Janet Clinch, upon the return of Jenny for her things, introduced herself to the old woman as the new nurse, sternly forbade a parting interview between the housekeeper and "the invalid," and saw her safely out of the house, bag and baggage. The next day Pinkerton went to an undertaker, and ordered a coffin of dimensions which he gave on a written paper, and left other instructions for as expensive a funeral as the case seemed to call for. His next business was a visit to the Session-Clerk of the district; whence he proceeded straight to a burying-ground at the West End, where he boldly hunted up the sexton, and said

that he wished the family burying-ground to be opened to receive the remains of his sister.

"When did the death take place?" asked the sexton, after noting the name and address, and turning up his books of record.

"Last night, at a quarter before twelve," was the steady reply, which was instantly noted down, exactly as it was afterwards read by me in the book.

"What was the cause of the death?"

"Disease of the heart."

"Who attended her?—I mean, what medical man?"

"Dr Wilkie."

"Very good; I require a certificate, signed by Dr Wilkie, to the effect that—"

"I have it here," coolly interrupted Pinkerton, producing the forged paper. "I have come straight from the doctor now."

The paper was keenly scrutinised, and at once believed to be genuine. The body of the document was written in an ordinary clerkly hand; but the signature was a careful imitation of that flourished off by the doctor in signing the will—a good imitation, too, as the doctor afterwards laughingly admitted to me.

Next day the funeral took place in a very quiet unostentatious style. Pinkerton had sent lithographed invitations to about a dozen old acquaintances of himself and his sister, and nearly half of that number appeared. But though the lawyer who had executed Miss Pinkerton's will was one of those invited, and though he brought the principal legatee, Mary Banks, with him to be allowed a view of the body, it was remarked that all of the mourners, including these two, had arrived too late to be thus favoured, as the coffin was screwed up—Pinkerton having been compelled to get it done before the arrival of the undertaker, to avoid offensive odours. Thus the grand funeral, with its waving plumes, jet black horses, with arching necks and tails sweeping the dust, and its attendant string of half-empty carriages, slowly drove off westward; leaving poor Mary Banks in tears on the pavement, as she gazed after what she believed to be the remains of her dearest friend on earth.

As she stood thus she was conscious of a light touch on the arm, and starting round, she found the faithful old Jenny in a similar plight at her side.

"She was a guid mistress," said the old dependent, between

her sobs. "I'll say that o' her, for a' she was whiles sae fyky; but oh, Mary, it's my opinion she's no come to her death by fair means. I'm thinkin' ye'll say that yersel', when the will's read."

"What will?" cried Mary, with a little start. "Did she really make another?"

"Deed did she, and I witnessed it, and it leaves a' to her black-hearted brother."

"I'm glad of that," said Mary, simply, after a moment's painful silence; "but if he has injured her in any way—oh, the thought sets my brain on fire!"

"He wadna daur—he surely wadna daur," feverishly replied the old woman. "But if ye think sae, ye'd better speak to Maister Parks, the lawyer that wrote oot the last will. He'll no see onybody wranged; and I maun say that baith George Pinkerton and that awfu' like nurse he got to attend her look fit for onything."

While these two sincere mourners were thus exchanging fears and suspicions and forming plans, the funeral was being gone through with the gravest decorum at the west end, only one man present having the slightest suspicion as to the real contents of the coffin. As soon as the last turf was laid, and the parting raising of hats had taken place, Pinkerton was turning away towards the mourning coach in waiting, when the lawyer mentioned by Jenny tapped him lightly on the arm. There was no love lost between the two, and it required a considerable effort on the part of the upright lawyer to overcome his repugnance and address the villain whom he had long since looked through and through.

"The last rites having been paid to my friend, Miss Pinkerton, I suppose there remains nothing to adjust but her last will and testament?" said the lawyer, with icy politeness. "I suppose you are aware of the existence of such a document?"

"I am aware that my sister was induced, by the artifices of scoundrels and interested persons, to put her name to such a paper," said Pinkerton, with an emphasis which made every word slash like a dagger; "but I rejoice to think that I have in my pocket at the present moment a document which will overturn every plot which has been concocted to rob me."

"There is another will, then?"

"There is."

"I shall probably be instructed to dispute it," replied the

lawyer, trying hard to repress the flush of annoyance which crossed his face.

"I guessed as much, and I am prepared accordingly," coolly returned Pinkerton. "I have made every step secure. One of the witnesses is Dr Wilkie, who can testify to the sanity of my sister; and the other was her faithful housekeeper, Jenny."

"Whom you turned out the same night?"

"Exactly—as I mean to do all sneaks and rogues," spitefully and pointedly replied Pinkerton, with a charming smile. "Your reign of power over the property is at an end."

"I could bear the loss if I were but certain that no villany has been practised upon one of my most esteemed friends," calmly retorted the lawyer, with a searching look which chilled the triumphant smile of the other.

"It is fortunate for you that we are alone," said Pinkerton, with something like a hiss. "There is such a thing as a law of libel."

"There shall be witnesses to-morrow, when I will attend at the house in Queen Street to examine the alleged last will and testament," calmly replied the lawyer, becoming cooler as the other lost his temper. "I will probably then repeat my suspicions, and you, if you consider them actionable, will have every opportunity for a law proceeding. Good-day."

He raised his hat, and Pinkerton instinctively did the same. They had quarrelled as gentlemen, and as such they parted; but after the parting Pinkerton's face was the more flushed and clouded of the two.

"He is a dangerous meddler—cool and systematic," he muttered savagely to himself, as he glared after the lawyer's retreating figure. "I must sell out, and vanish before his suspicions are confirmed."

Meanwhile the lawyer, moving rapidly along Princes Street, came upon two well-known figures near the foot of the Mound, Mary Banks and the housekeeper, sorrowfully returning to their new homes at the south side; and a very few words from the young girl not only confirmed his own suspicions of foul play, but led them off in a new direction.

"I care nothing for the will; let it be good or bad, he has a right to his sister's money before a stranger," impulsively cried the young girl. "But it is Miss Pinkerton's obscure death and funeral which troubles me most. I am certain she has been poisoned or put away with. He always threatened

to do it in his letters, and who knows that he did not keep his word?"

"You forget—the doctor's certificate after viewing the body is always necessary before an interment can take place," interposed the lawyer. "I have already satisfied myself that this condition has been fulfilled."

"I don't care for all the certificates in the world," warmly cried the girl. "Doctors may be deceived—cheated—hoaxed. More : they have been known to connive at such things—help people to them."

"You are a little rash," gravely replied the lawyer. "Dr Wilkie is above every such suspicion. I know him well, and would stake my life on his integrity."

"Still, there has been foul play ; I know it—feel it," persisted the girl ; "and if you will not move in the matter, I shall consult a detective ; put the whole matter in the hands of the police."

"But I will move in the matter," cried the lawyer. "You have just hit upon my own idea of the whole affair. I *feel*, from my knowledge of the man, that there is something wrong ; but reasonable surmise as to what that wrong is, I can advance none. You pass Charles Street on your way home—let me take you up to see a friend of mine, a detective, and get his opinion of the matter. We can then, if we think advisable, go round to Dr Wilkie, and question him closely on the symptoms of the patient. I have repeatedly heard her detail her ailments, but never once heard her mention disease of the heart."

Thus they arranged it, and in half-an-hour had interrupted me at tea to listen to the dark and complicated story, as far as it was known to themselves. I could find no tangible grounds for suspicion as the affair was put before me, but thought that there could be no harm in having a word with Dr Wilkie on the subject in a cautious way, not likely to bring down trouble on the heads of the inquirers ; and as the house was only in the next street, I put on my hat and accompanied them.

We found the doctor at home, and he no sooner sighted the lawyer than he said, shaking hands with him—

"Ah ! so your friend, Miss Pinkerton, is dead ? I was quite struck with the news."

"I have just come to speak of her," gravely replied the lawyer. "Are you really certain that she was troubled with heart disease ?"

"As certain as that I now look you in the face," clearly and readily returned Dr Wilkie. "The symptoms are unmistakable."

This was a staggerer; and unfortunately it at once put a stop to our inquiries in that direction.

The certificate as to the cause of death was never mentioned, we imagining that it had been duly written and signed by him; and he imagining that, having only been called in as an interloper, her own medical attendant had furnished the certificate.

"Do you think there was no foul play in the getting up of the will?" inquired the lawyer, after some further talk. "Was she really sane at the time, and under no undue influence or threats?"

"I am certain she was sane; I could swear that in any Court with a clear conscience," firmly replied the doctor. "Nor do I think the slightest coercion had been used. I had never before seen the lady; but from her intelligence, acuteness, and firmness in stating her wishes, I felt certain that she was expressing her real mind and will."

This was nearly all we could elicit. It is strange now to me, in looking back on the affair, that we did not even *stumble* on some clue to the truth at this stage; but so it was, not having the slightest inkling of the facts, we could not make any very strict inquiries in that direction, and thus for the time the thing was at rest.

But while all this was going on, and we were leaving the doctor's house more hopeless and mystified than ever, a sudden and alarming cloud had gathered over the sunny prospects of Pinkerton and his companion over in Queen Street. The dreadful thunderbolt was nothing but the simple note given below, which was dated from a private asylum for the insane, a few miles along the coast—

"George Pinkerton, Esq.

"DEAR SIR,—We have the pleasure of announcing to you that your sister's reason is now perfectly restored to her, and that we think her removal by you both necessary and expedient—a request in which Miss Pinkerton herself joins.—We have the honour to be, dear Sir, your most obt. servts.,

"WHIP & SCRAGGER, M.D."

"Good God! here is a blow!" cried Pinkerton, throwing the note across the table to his companion. "What on earth is to be done?"

Janet Clinch read the note through and through with a face of iron, and then tossed it contemptuously aside.

"Poh! the men only want a bribe," she said with a scowl. "Send them forty pounds, and tell them on no account to think of giving up charge of her for another month, as you fear a relapse. Say you will pay all expenses, take all the risk, and allow for every extra that they may choose to provide for her."

"That is showing the cloven foot. If they should betray me?" said Pinkerton, with trembling hesitation.

"That is supposing them to be angels instead of asylum proprietors," harshly returned the woman. "They live by *keeping* patients, not sending them out of their hands."

Thus they reasoned, but for once they were doomed to be wofully mistaken. The letter was written and despatched; but while it was on its way, a strange chance meeting had at last given us the right clue. Dr Wilkie happened to be called to a consultation over some peculiar case in the New Town, and there he met one of the medical men who had been called in in the first instance by Pinkerton to testify to his sister's insanity. This gentleman had known and attended the lady for years, and almost his first words to Dr Wilkie were—

"How on earth did you come to imagine Miss Pinkerton to be suffering from heart disease?"

"I did not imagine it, I tested it," was the steady reply.

"Then you were completely deceived. A slight softening of the brain was all that she suffered from; her constitution otherwise was sound and vigorous as my own," returned the professor. "Remember, I have studied her case; you saw her only twice."

"Not twice, only once; but I am none the less confident that it is you who have been mistaken," returned Dr Wilkie, smiling at the other's firmness.

"Twice, you mean, to count the viewing of the body after death," politely corrected the professor.

"You are again mistaken; *I was not called in to view the body*," was the astounding reply, given so simply and quietly that the other stared at him in astonishment.

"What! and did you sign the certificate without viewing and examining the body?"

"I signed no certificate," hotly returned Dr Wilkie; "but had I been called upon I should have done so without hesitation, after viewing the body, of course."

"You did not sign the certificate?" echoed the professor, perfectly aghast. "This is very strange. I have been shown

the certificate by Mr Parks, the solicitor, and it certainly bears your signature."

"Then it is a forgery," clearly and firmly returned the doctor; "I never saw or heard of such a document."

This surprising discovery sent the two gentlemen straight over to Mr Parks; and he in turn communicating with us, we, after ferreting out the ominous fact that no one had seen the body of the lady after death, thought proper to have a watch placed upon the house in Queen Street, while, armed with the necessary warrant, we made our way at about four in the morning to the burying-ground, where we had the coffin lifted, and thence conveyed to the Police Office, for the purpose of having the body examined. Our surprise and mystification may be imagined when, instead of a body, we found only a collection of stones and earth.

A warrant for the apprehension of Pinkerton was at once made out, but before it left the Office another blaze of light was let in on the affair by a visitor from the east coast, in the person of Dr Whip, part proprietor of a private asylum for the insane. This gentleman, after treating us to some rambling details which we could not understand, at last electrified us by producing Pinkerton's last letter, in which he stated broadly that he would make it worth their while to keep his sister in confinement for another fortnight. Dr Whip then proceeded to explain that his establishment had always been above suspicion, and that he wished our advice as to how he should act. "Our advice" took some time to concoct, but after we had finished, the doctor was introduced to Mary Banks and her returned sweetheart, with old Jenny the housekeeper, to all of whom the transporting news that Miss Pinkerton was still alive and well came like a message from Heaven. The four drove back to the asylum together, and the ecstasy and joy of the meeting of mistress and servants I can imagine though I did not witness it.

Meanwhile, the watch we had placed on the house at Queen Street had at last roused the fears of the worst of the two crime-stained schemers, Janet Clinch. She soon became satisfied that it was really the police who were upon the track; and, without hesitation or compunction, she marched over to the Office, and made a clean breast of the whole affair, conditionally on being accepted as evidence against Pinkerton. The strange case was yet so involved in mystery that we were glad to give the stipulated promise, though I am bound to confess that,

before she had finished, we heartily regretted the same, finding that she herself was by far the worst of the two.

Pinkerton we picked up after a desperate chase and struggle, and duly landed in the cells ; but, long before the day appointed for the trial, the first shadow of a strange retribution had fallen upon him. Some strange freaks and violent attacks on the turnkeys guarding and attending him caused him to be at last examined by the medical officer, when he was at once pronounced to be suffering from disease of the brain, and incapable of being judged or sentenced. He was removed by order from the gaol to the asylum of insane paupers ; and thence, after a few years, at the urgent solicitations and exertions of his sister, he was removed to the care of the very gentlemen who had formerly received and tended his sister. But in his case the result was less favourable ; he became every year more violent and ferocious, and at length died the miserable death which in his heart he had awarded to another.

Janet Clinch was released eventually, and actually dropped dead of heart disease a few years afterwards in the streets of Glasgow. Miss Pinkerton is still alive, happy and loved, though pretty old and frail. I see her myself, on sunny days, in West Princes Street Gardens, tended by a matronly-looking lady, who bears a faint resemblance to the Mary Banks that was, and surrounded by a happy troop of blithesome children, who seem never to tire of calling her "Grandma."

THE SONG OF THE SHIRT.

AMONG the occasional auxiliaries of the Happy Land gang was a lazy ne'er-do-well, called Jack Turpie. He was not thoroughly into the profession, thanks to his slaving young wife, but he bade fair to drift into it in the end. Laziness begets drunkenness, drunkenness begets thieving, and the crimes that come from thieving are beyond the power of man to sum up; and the first two of these stages he had already reached. In a word, Jack Turpie, though yet under thirty, was a miserable sot, who at any moment would have bartered his soul for a glass of whisky.

One night in January, when the whole city lay clad in snow, Mary Turpie, Jack's wife, sat stitching as for dear life at a dozen superfine linen shirts, in their miserable garret near the head of the Canongate. It was the old, old story—a wail which had, even then, been thrilled out in the "Song of the Shirt"—rich garments passing through starved, skeleton fingers, which were quickened by the most urgent want and wetted by the bitterest of tears. A lord was to wear the shirts, a lord who had ordered them at the first shirtmaker's on the Bridge, and who was to drive up to London next day wearing one of them, and dozing in a first-class carriage. And he would have them, too, not because Mary Turpie, late as she had received them, could sit up all night to get them done,—and she being what shirtmakers call a "button-holer," would consequently be the last to touch the shirts before they could be pronounced finished, and ready for the laundress; or because the foreman had sent word that they would be called for early in the morning; but because—because of something which stood on a table away at the window—something which, resolutely as she turned her back upon it, always rose before her, filling her eyes, blinding her to the glimmer of her candle, and hopelessly staining her white work with tears. The something was straight and stiff, and covered with a white sheet—the something was a dead child! Yes, Mary's first-born—the only thread that held

her to life and hope—was dead ; and upon her nimble fingers getting the work done, and placing the money as a first instalment of the funeral expenses in the undertaker's hand on the morrow, depended whether the coffin was or was not to be a pauper's. She was alone in the world—for what companionship can there be in a selfish drunkard?—alone with her grief, her hunger, and her work.

“ If I could only lay my wee Jimmy peacefully in the grave, and have no one saying he was buried as a pauper, I could die content,” she murmured to herself, in the midst of a passionate burst of sobbing. “ I will be better dead ; I have no one to kiss me and call me mother now, and Jack's love is dead—dead long before his child.”

A step on the stair made her start and pause with the needle, and her quivering hand poised in mid air.

“ It's Jack,” she whispered to herself, in hushed tones, as the slow heavy footsteps came dragging up the wooden stair. “ He is nearly sober too ; oh, I hope he'll go to bed quietly and let me work !”

Slowly the unsteady feet crossed the passage, then there was a pause and a fumbling over the door of the garret for the latch, and then the door was driven open and her husband entered.

Mary looked up and smiled. Only think ! picture it to yourself ; a smile on that white face under such circumstances !

“ Well, Jack, lad, I'm glad thou's come home,” she said kindly, “ I've been so lonely without thee ;” and then she hesitated and added with a sigh, “ thee and Jimmy.”

But Jack was only half drunk, and sulky as well, and in no mood for sentiment. He stood blinking fiercely at the work in her hands, swaying unsteadily on his legs the while, and then hoarsely growled out—

“ Pah, never mind the boy ! He's better away than in a world where everybody's against an honest man. Have ye got any money ?”

“ O Jack, you won't drink any more to-night !” pleaded Mary, dropping her work and gently taking his hot hand in her own. “ I've only a few coppers ; but, remember, I've to sit up all night, and that all the money I'll get in the morning must go to the undertaker to help to bury our boy.”

“ What's that to me ?” harshly returned Turpie ; “ let them bury him who starved him—him and us. I must have drink—I tell you I must—to shut out the horrible thoughts that

creep into my head at times : it's my only comfort. Now, Mary, do give us a trifle ;" and he shivered pitifully in her grasp as he spoke.

"O Jack, don't ask me—don't!" she passionately rejoined; "It is drink that is killing you, making you unkind to me, and sending me fast to my grave."

But while she spoke she could see the flush of fury rising on his cheeks, and in another moment his hand was drawn away with a furious wrench.

"I tell you I must have it!" he shouted, towering over her shrinking figure with all the fury of a madman. "Don't force me to kill you!"

Mary shrank backwards, slowly and with dilated eyes, till she reached the window where the table bearing the sheeted little body stood, and then with a weary cry she dropped on her knees before it, throwing out her arms beside the senseless form, and crying with passionate energy—

"O Jimmy, my wee darling, I wish I were dead too!"

Turpie's uplifted hand dropped by his side, and he stared at her stupidly in silence.

"Oh! why didn't I die wi' thee!" passionately ejaculated the distracted mother. "I would get no kicks or blows in heaven; and there's no hunger there, nor weary work that never ends. My wee dear—my wee boy—if I could but lie down in the grave beside thee, and end it all!"

The weary cry echoed strangely through the dull-lighted garret, making even the furious drunkard for a time uneasy. He stared at her in his dazed, stupid way; tried to mutter some words of comfort; then slowly brought up his knuckles to his eyes and wiped away a few maudlin tears. The quivering woman remained prostrate before him, clasping the dead child, heeding, seeing nothing; and in a guilty, hesitating way he at length shuffled out of the garret and was gone. The minutes sped on, but the poor mother remained kneeling thus, clasping her fevered temples tight in her thin hands and trying to shape a prayer of thankfulness—thankfulness that her husband had left her—till nearly half-an-hour was gone, and then a glance at the straight, uncoffined figure before her roused her and goaded her back to her candle and her toil. Stitch! stitch! stitch! stitch! bravely she fought on through the long, still hours, till the last button was on, the last thread broken off, and the shirts folded away ready for the message-boy whenever he chose to appear; and then between the last

flicker of her candle and the grey light of a new day the weary shirtmaker lay down on her wretched pallet, and was soon wrapped in a heavy slumber.

Scarcely had the exhausted woman been hidden from her woes than there was a soft footfall on the stair and passage without, and Turpie glided stealthily into the room, with eyes shiny and fierce with the unsatisfied craving for drink, and began to creep about, hunting for money, or its equivalent, in every hole and corner in the room. With all the cunning of a maniac, he had slipped off his shoes before ascending, and then waited patiently till all was quiet within; and now he exerted the same caution while slipping about the room prying into every likely spot, picking his wife's pocket of the few coppers in her possession, and actually searching *under the sheet* on the table for suspected hidden stores. The result was so paltry that deep whispered curses broke from his lips as he shook the miserable coins in his hand and glared round on every side; and, approaching the sleeping woman, he was about to rouse her with a furious kick, when his eye lighted on the finished dozen of shirts. The temptation swayed him, but did not overcome him in a moment. He stood there, in a manner petrified, staring at them greedily and hungrily; then he glanced at the pale face of his sleeping wife; then his breath came quick and short; and then turning his head and shutting his eyes on everything, he slipped across and had the bundle in his hand. The rest was a mere snatch and a scurry, and then he found himself down the stair, with his shoes on and the bundle under his arm, out in the cool, fresh air of the morning, with the cold winter sunshine flashing down from windows and church vanes on his blinking eyes, and the streets alive with honester men hurrying to breakfast. He had paused in uncertainty at the head of St Mary's Wynd, debating with himself whether he should sell the things right off, or give his wife a chance by merely pawning them, when he felt a hand on his shoulder and heard a voice at his side which made him start round with manifest relief.

"My dear young friend, how do you do?" said Simon Penbank, taking his hand and shaking it warmly, after a fashion peculiar to him when meditating any great treachery. "Taking the air, I perceive; probably like myself upon an empty stomach. Times are hard with us all at present. I do not hesitate to admit that I have not a penny—not an article in the world but the clothes in which I stand. But you, my

friend—you are not so badly off,” and Simon bestowed an affectionate glance upon the bundle of shirts under Turpie’s arm; “you have still some goods to dispose of. Happy man!—you are not cursed with talent to a fatal degree. I am, and, behold, I am penniless! Might I inquire your destination?”

Turpie stared at him for some moments in silence, and then said—

“Come here, I want your advice, and will stand you a drain in return.”

“Most certainly,” responded Penbank, with joyful alacrity. “My wisdom is ever at your service for the small consideration of a drain; this way,” and he moved into a common stair, where, out of reach of curious gazers, the bundle of shirts was opened to his sight and minutely examined.

“Remarkably fine,” he ventured to say, feeling them between his fingers with a critical air—“just the quality of shirts, I should say, that I deserve to wear; but, ah! the world is full of injustice. And you wished to know—”

“Whether to stall them or get them fenced.”

“Em!—ah!” dubiously returned Penbank, feeling his chin thoughtfully and cautiously. “My dear friend, it all depends on circumstances; you will get quite as much money the one way as the other. On the whole, I believe the pawnshop will be the more profitable of the two, if you are prepared for the additional risk.”

“Ah! the risk, of course,” said Turpie thoughtfully, eyeing the other. “P’raps I might get somebody to do that for me—for a consideration, you know,” he added, as he saw the other’s countenance fall. “Now, would you not—”

“My dear sir, excuse me,” fervently rejoined Penbank, with a low bow and a smile of irresistible sweetness. “You speak in ignorance of my excessively timid nature, and I—there! I forgive you! You must know that wherever the word Risk is mentioned, there I am not. I regret it, more deeply than yourself. It is painful; it keeps me down in the world; but I cannot alter the fact. But stay. Could your wife not be induced—”

“Don’t mention *her* name!” hoarsely and savagely exclaimed Turpie, with an energy that caused the other to open his eyes. “Don’t now, or I’ll kill you on the spot!”

“Ah! I’ll have the promised taste of spirits at some future time,” suddenly remarked Penbank, raising his hat and pre-

paring to move off. "Such language grates upon my fine organization ; causes in me a shiver of dread."

"Stay," interposed Turpie, detaining him by force. "There is Mol Baker, of the Happy Land, crossing to the pawnshop now ; what would you say to hand her the shirts and get her for a trifle to stall them with her own?"

"A happy thought—a truly happy thought, worthy of even my own brain," responded Penbank, with ecstasy beckoning the woman sharply. "Do you hand them over to her, and tell her to pawn them in your wife's name, and they are yours again at any time for the sum you receive on them."

The wily suggestion was at once adopted. The shirts were handed over to the woman, who in a short time reappeared with ten shillings and a ticket, bearing the name "Mary Turpie," which she placed in Turpie's hand. One shilling he gave to the woman for her trouble, and then he and Simon Penbank adjourned to the nearest public-house, where the owner of the money at once called in drink, and proceeded to enjoy himself in his own peculiar fashion. But had he been less muddled with drink he would have noted the thoughtful demeanour of his companion as he drew out of him not only all the particulars regarding the shirts, but also the name of the shirtmaker on the Bridge who owned them. Presently Penbank, who had got all he wanted, rose to go. The drunkard looked up in surprise, and inquired the reason.

"Business—business of importance calls me away from your esteemed society," said the spy, with his most ingratiating smile. "You, my friend, have this morning made a few coins ; I must emulate your example. The early bird catches the worm ; my worm, I regret to say, yet reposes in security and peace ;" and warmly wringing the hand of the man he was about to betray, Simon Penbank got out once more to the street. Outside, a cloud of doubt and indecision settled on his face, and caused him to fidget nervously and feverishly with the tattered gloves as he drew them on.

"What am I to do?" he asked himself ; "in what way can I pounce upon my worm, so to speak, so as to be most profitable to myself. The consideration is a grave one. Seeing that no actual theft has been committed, I question if M'Indoe would interfere. If I go to M'Govan, he would probably say he had no case till the despoiled party lodged a complaint ; after which he might—dear, implusive man !—he might apply his hard-toed boots to my coat-tails, and land me on the snowy

street outside. But the shirtmaker; yes, it is my only chance; he at least has an interest, a powerful interest, in recovering the property, and will probably take a harsh view of the case on the instant—shirtmakers generally do, I believe, bless their cold hearts! when they have poor and powerless wretches to deal with, and fairly catch them in a fault. Ho, then, for the Bridge—the Bridge and the shirtmaker's!"

Arrived at the great establishment on the Bridge, he was curtly directed to the workshop or cutting-rooms at the back; and, making his way down the narrow street, he was soon standing in the identical room where poor Kate M'Indoe had made her last attempt at honesty, and after a little delay was introduced to the head cutter or foreman.

"A beautiful day this; fine skating weather," sweetly remarked Penbank, first placing the rim of his hat against his breast in a low bow, and then tendering the foreman a cold paw from which he had removed the remnant of a glove. "You do not know me, my dear sir," he quickly added, with a patronising smile, seeing the man stare in astonishment; "but it matters not. My name is Penbank—Christian name, Simon. I have at times been useful to the police in tracing stolen property, but never, mark you, without being well paid for it. Now, I have reason to believe that a dozen shirts of superfine quality—I consider myself a judge—have this morning been disposed of by a suspicious character, the ownership of which I have traced to this establishment. If you wish the property recovered and the culprit punished, just be good enough to give me your word that I shall receive a fee of ten shillings for my trouble, and the thing is done."

"What! a dozen shirts—superfine? It can't be the order for Lord —, which went to Turpie last night to be button-holed?" gasped the foreman, staggering back pallid with dismay. "Speak, man! If that order be delayed we are ruined for ever. His lordship would never forgive us, and would take dozens of wealthy patrons with him."

"I grieve to say that I cannot speak," returned Penbank, perfectly unmoved. "My wealth lies here," and he touched his forehead significantly. "To ask me to give you part of my brain-work free of charge is to ask me to bestow upon you, a perfect stranger, part of my wealth. Sir, the demand was hasty; unreasonable on your part. I am thoroughly selfish in all my dealings: for ten shillings you shall have the information."

"But what guarantee have I of your good faith?" faintly demanded the foreman.

"The best of all securities—the fact that you retain the money in your pocket till the work is done," quickly returned Penbank.

"Then I agree—your demand shall be satisfied if the property is recovered in time to be of use to us, and the vile woman is really convicted," said the foreman. "Experience might have taught me not to trust valuable work with such a poverty-stricken wretch; but then she is such a beautiful worker, and was always so swift and punctual. But was it really Mary Turpie?"

"The woman who pawned the shirts gave that name," placidly returned Penbank—"Mary Turpie, No. — Canon-gate."

"The low thief!" hotly exclaimed the foreman. "That is as bad as stealing them; the law punishes the crime as such, and in this case it shall. Do you wish me to go with you?"

"For the identification of the property? It would almost be necessary—yes;" and in another moment the foreman and he were striding down the High Street towards the pawn-broker's.

They were received with the utmost consternation, and the man even showed them the written entry in the book, with the ink not long dry—"One dozen shirts—Mary Turpie, No. — Canon-gate." But he resolutely refused to give up the property without an order from the Police Office, or the presence of any well-known detective or policeman; and, eager as the foreman was for possession, he was forced to comply. The two got down the stair again, and then the foreman hurriedly turned to Penbank—

"Your agreement includes the safe capture and conviction of the culprit; go up to her house, and please to remain there, and never lose sight of her for a moment till I appear with the police."

"But, my dear sir," began Penbank, in eager remonstrance; but the words were lost, for the foreman was gone with swift strides in the direction of the Central Office, leaving the spy in rather an unpleasant predicament.

"Face the woman, ten shillings—ten shillings; face the woman," he said meditatively, weighing the matter on his fingers; "face the woman kicks the beam—I go to do his bidding;" and, with a sigh of relief, he resumed his gloves and got up the street to the abode of the seamstress.

He knocked long before he was heard ; but at last there was a hasty movement within, and the door was opened by Mary herself, looking very pallid and worn. She seemed to be scarcely awake, for in her flurry she invited him to enter, and hurriedly presented him with the only chair in the room. Penbank glanced curiously round on the bare walls ; and then he winced palpably as his eye fell on the little sheeted form on the table, which he instantly connected with the sunken eyes and tear-stained face of the poor mother. He tried to say something about the beauty of the weather or the cheerfulness of the sunshine ; but his eye always came back to the white thing, on which the sun was glinting, and the words died away huskily in his throat.

"My good madam," he at last stammered, "I have called about rather an unpleasant affair. Last night, I believe you were entrusted with a dozen shirts to finish—"

A scream interrupted him. Mary's eye had travelled to the corner in which she had laid the shirts before lying down. The bundle was gone, and her first thought was of her unfortunate husband.

"Gone ! gone ! after all my toil and prayers," she wailed in a burst of grief, sinking helplessly on her knees, and covering her face with her hands. "O Jack, you have killed me now ; and wee Jimmy, wee Jimmy, will be buried in a pauper's grave !"

Penbank suddenly looked hard at the ceiling, then away out at the window, then at the blank fireplace and empty grate : and then he tried with all his power to think of some cheerful subject, such as a glass of strong whisky, or a clever bit of treachery ; but at last he had to give up in despair and mutter—

"Hang it ! I wish the police would come and let me out of this. This is the hardest-won money I ever earned."

"Oh, how I have fought and struggled to get a few shillings to pay for my bairn's funeral ! If he had but been laid in the ground, I could have endured all without a sigh !" sobbed Mary Turpie ; "and now all hope is gone, for who will now trust me with work ? But, tell me, are they gone beyond recovery ? Did he sell them ?"

"Not quite so bad. He pawned them ; pawned them in your name," hoarsely returned the spy ; "but I fear much the fact will now avail little, for the police are already on their way to this house—"

"Let them come! let them come!" cried the woman, starting up with a radiant look in her eyes that made the seedy spy open his eyes in surprise. "Poor Jack is safe after all! He did not know what he was doing, poor fellow; and it would be wrong to punish him. I am the guilty one, and I should suffer. I remember distinctly pawning the shirts, and you must not gainsay my word. Oh, kind, good man! promise not to criminate my husband!" and she imploringly clasped her hands before Penbank's shrinking figure. "Remember he is the father of my dead little lad, and if they put him in prison again he will come out worse—perhaps a real confirmed thief. Let me suffer—oh, only say that you will let me suffer for him!"

Penbank's eyes stuck far out of their sockets; he appeared to be smitten dumb, though making prodigious efforts to get out a sound of some kind; his mouth jerked painfully; his eyes wandered first to the sheeted form at the window, and then down to the tear-stained kneeling figure grovelling so piteously before him; and then he raised one of the tattered gloves to his eyes and wiped away—a tear!

"Ha-a-ang it!" he chokingly ejaculated, "I didn't bargain for this;" and then a fresh burst of tears came gushing into his eyes, which neither tattered gloves nor knuckles could remove fast enough; "I—I ca-a-n't stand it any longer. I've always aimed at being a Comfortable Villain, but I'm not comfortable. No, I'm *d—d uncomfortable!* I must save you, ma'am; I have not a penny in the world of my own, but I have a friend who I believe will advance as much. I will get the money and the ticket, and lift the goods. It is my only chance, for if I altered my story now they would not believe it. The police unfortunately believe me to be a great liar. There are some grounds for their belief. Dry your tears, and if you can be saved by mortal man I shall do it."

He waited for no thanks or reply of any kind, but was down the stairs like a shot, and racing—yes, positively racing with the speed of an express engine—towards the house of M'Indoe, in the Horse Wynd. In spite of every remonstrance and objection from Nosie, he burst in and presented himself, panting and gasping for breath, at the bedside of the sick man.

"O, M'Indoe, give me ten shillings, for the love of God!" he gasped out. "It's to save a poor, innocent woman from being thrown into prison."

M'Indoe, ill though he was, smiled out in the spy's face, and then the smile merged into a bitter, scornful laugh.

"Go and tell your story to some one else, Simon Penbank," he weakly replied, but with all his old energy flashing from his eyes. "I know every trick of the cards, and have believed your wild tales too often to be done again. Do not try to rob a thief."

Simon Penbank staggered back with a faint moan, pale to the lips, and knuckling quietly at his eyes, and the tears which he removed looked remarkably real.

"Hugh M'Indoe," he answered in a low, earnest tone, so uncommon to him that the reformed thief opened his eyes in surprise, "I tell you you are mistaken. I swear by all that is sacred—"

"Stop!"

The one word came out in a burst. M'Indoe had started right up in bed, and raised his hand in horror and disgust startling to behold.

"Simon Penbank," he painfully gasped out, "you are a liar, and everything that is bad; but you shall not perjure yourself in my house. Go!"

There was no disobeying that awful look and command; and with a groan of anguish Penbank slunk from the room and down the stair. Before descending the last flight, he sat down on the cold steps and rocked to and fro in an agony of thought, with his face hidden in his hands.

"What can I do?" he groaned. "Oh, for the courage and opportunity for a good robbery! I'd do it; yes, I'd actually do it to save that poor girl. But even now it may be too late, and the spots may be lugging her to the Office—"

A touch on the shoulder made him look up, and he beheld the grimy face of Nosie Mincher, who was holding out a dirty hand full of clean white silver.

"It's my own savings, money hard wrought for," he simply said. "I'll trust you for once, Simon Penbank; but mind, if it's all a lie about saving the poor woman, the curse fall on your own head!"

"Amen!" fervently returned the spy, springing up with a new light in his eyes. "Nosie, lad, you'll never regret it!" and, with a remarkably nimble bound for one of his age, he was down the stair and out of sight.

His first visit was to the public-house where he had left Turpie. He found him fast asleep in the box, and, without troubling to wake him, he coolly picked his pocket of the pawn-ticket, and vanished like a shot in the direction of the

pawnbroker's. This man was unwilling to give up the bundle, but Penbank's tearful entreaties, with the statement that it was to save a poor woman from prison, prevailed in the end, and the bundle was placed in his hand. With a joyful rush he was down the stair and up the street towards the stair of the seamstress. He had all but reached it, when two figures advancing rapidly from the opposite direction made him stagger back as if he had been shot. The two figures consisted of the shirtmaker's foreman and myself. I had been busy when the man arrived, but the delay had not been quite great enough to allow Penbank to accomplish his work.

"Might I inquire your destination?" he asked, in his old manner; and then, finding that my eye rested keenly on the bundle, which all his efforts could not conceal under his spare black coat, he smiled out sweetly, and added—"Ah! some little articles of apparel which I have just released from the custody of a relative. Ah! Mr Shirtmaker, excuse me for not observing you sooner. I regret to state that I made a mistake about those shirts. *Your* dozen shirts are safe—already on their way to your shop—so I cannot claim my fee. Well, better luck next time. Good-day to you both—good-day;" and with a hasty brush he was past us, and up the stair like lightning, leaving us standing staring after him perfectly dumfounded.

"I scarcely believe him. Let us go up and question the woman," suggested the foreman at last; and up we went.

Penbank was standing just within the door, a bundle suspiciously like the one he had had under his arm lay on the floor unheeded, and on her knees before him was poor Mary Turpie, kissing in ecstasy his hand, and wetting it with her passionate tears.

"Hullo! what's all this about?" roughly demanded the foreman. "And you, woman, where's the dozen shirts I sent to finish?"

"They are here!" cried Penbank, lifting up the bundle and presenting it with his lowest and most exultant bow. "I was wrong; they will not be on the way to your shop until you yourself quit this room, which, seeing what is over there at the window, I trust you will have the good sense to do at once."

Utterly mystified, but quite unable to reply, we took leave; and it was not till years after that I understood the whole of the facts as I have narrated them. By that time the Turpies had returned to their native place, Sunderland, where Jack

was doing remarkably well, working at his own trade as a ship painter, and where Mary neither needed to wail out the "Song of the Shirt" nor live in a garret, for they had bought a house of their own, and had little feet pattering through it, which made a backward glance at their Edinburgh life seem only a snatch of a frightful dream.

DIAMOND CUT DIAMOND.

NOTWITHSTANDING the temporary softening noted in the last sketch, Simon Penbank was still, to all intents and purposes, a professional thief; and his position, never enviable, had grown decidedly precarious since his employment by M'Indoe in his onslaughts on the thieves' gang. Before, all honest and well-doing citizens had been his enemies; now to these were added the thieves themselves.

"Could it be believed that there is in the world such ingratitude?" he pathetically remarked one day in the High Street, when he had stopped to inform me of the fact. "What have I done to earn their hate? Have I not provided them with a comfortable home, away from the harassing bustle and turmoil of the world, in which their bread is ever given them, and their water always sure; where servants continually wait upon them; where their spiritual welfare is carefully attended to by a really pious old gentleman, with whom I myself have had many a profitable conversation; and where a light and agreeable occupation prevents that dreadful weariness with which the wealthier classes are afflicted? Why, then, should they breathe out upon me expressions of murderous hate?"

"Because you are a vile traitor, and would sell your own brother for a shilling; that's why you are despised alike by cross and square," I shortly returned, trying to move away. "I myself, upon the earliest opportunity, shall have the greatest pleasure in nipping you up, and landing you in the comfortable home of which you speak."

"There it is!" he mournfully ejaculated, forcibly detaining me by the button-hole. "Ever since the world began has it been the fate of the poor philosopher to be despised alike by good and bad. You too are against me. I stand between two armies, who, though too widely separated to materially injure each other, are nevertheless sufficiently near to play with murderous effect upon my miserable frame. But, mark

me, my dear Jamie, though I am a thief, I am still a loyal subject of Her Majesty the Queen, and can claim protection from bodily injury along with the meanest. I will compel you—yes, you—to extend to me your sheltering arm in the hour of need.”

“What! is the climax, then, really so near?” I exclaimed, brightening up with undisguised pleasure. “I’m glad of that.”

A cloud of wrath crossed his face for a moment, but, quickly recovering himself, he bestowed upon me his sweetest smile, which always made me shudder more than his darkest frown.

“Ah, my dear Jamie,” he cheerfully remarked, drawing on his gloves and moving away, “you will have your little joke, even at the expense of your dearest friends. My son, I forgive you. All your looks of disgust and wrath cannot conceal the warm glow of your heart beneath. Meanwhile, wishing you many captures, I bid you good-bye, and remain, ever sincerely yours, Simon Penbank, Esquire.” And before I could get out a word of the indignant burst at my tongue’s end, he had adjusted his hat, given his farewell bow, and flitted gracefully away up the High Street out of sight.

But the feeling against Penbank only smouldered; it required a master-hand to fan it to a flame, and the only master-hand likely to attempt the task was the man he had helped to trap—The Ruffian, then in prison. Though we little dreamt of it, while Penbank and I were holding the above conversation in the High Street, this irrepressible villain was preparing to strike at M’Indoe, and, as a preparatory blow, had resolved to deprive him of his right arm, Simon Penbank. Having some months of his term still to complete, to strike the blow himself was impossible; he therefore looked about him as usual for an agent. Picking oakum close to him was a Manchester thief and sharper, named Ned, The Buttoner, who was in only for a few days on a charge of creating a disturbance, and was not known at all in Edinburgh in his real character; and to this man The Ruffian at last revealed his plans for the future. As a part of these plans was to form a new gang, and place Ned, The Buttoner, in a responsible position therein, a compact was readily struck between them; and included in this compact was a carefully-devised plot for the ensnaring of Simon Penbank. Strange to say, the moment The Ruffian confessed his identity to the other he was looked up to with a species of reverence, and the clever English thief actually felt flattered at being chosen as his henchman. For the plot against Pen-

bank, however, money was required, and at last with manifest reluctance The Ruffian revealed the locality of a hide of his own, where enough, both real and false, might be procured for the purpose in hand.

"But you must be wary," was his last warning to The Buttoner. "Of all cunning men, the most difficult to catch napping is Simon Penbank. When you think you are most sure of him, be then most on your guard, for then you may be blindly walking into one of his traps. All your gentlemanly airs, all your liberality with money and drink, and all your flattery and profuse compliments, will be completely thrown away if you once allow him to suspect your character or your purpose. Fortunately, you are a stranger in the city—excepting that one affair at Leith Races, which happened years ago—but do not rely too much on the circumstance. He is the most lynx-eyed spy that ever walked the earth, and will search out your weakest point while innocently smiling into your face."

"There is little to fear," confidently returned The Buttoner. "You may consider the thing done, and him booked for ten years."

Thus blindly reasoned the sharper; and, as he was set at liberty the day after, he proceeded at once to put the plan into execution. His first business was to look out the still unoccupied shop of The Ruffian in St Mary's Wynd, where he dislodged the pile of money from its hiding-place, a trifling circumstance in itself, but destined to prove an important clue in the hands of Simon Penbank. He next procured a gentlemanly outfit—a leather travelling trunk, carefully weighted and locked—and, placing it and himself into a cab, he drove over to a second-class hotel in Register Street, and engaged a modest parlour and bedroom, giving himself out as a gentleman tourist from Manchester staying a few days to see the various objects of interest in and about the city.

I have now given the exact position of the two schemers, and may come to the active play between them—the gentle application of the two diamonds to each other for the grand test as to which should prove keenest and hardest.

Simon Penbank was strolling through Princes Street Gardens one bright day in March, viewing rather enviously the wealth which floated past him on the other side of the street, and sincerely regretting his want of courage and ability to appropriate the same, when he heard himself politely but lazily addressed

from behind regarding some trifling point about the Scott Monument at his side. Starting round with his wonted alacrity and stereotyped bow, he saw before him a young gentleman of rather affected demeanour, but of faultless cut of clothes, indicating negligently with his cigar the point in question, while he leaned against the balustrade of the terrace and deferentially waited a reply. The circumstance was so uncommon, and withal so promising, that for a moment the cunning spy allowed a smile of exultation to spread itself over his face. I say "for a moment" most truly; for the next instant, and before his answer was half finished, the smile had been damped and his own searching gaze sharpened and intensified by a nameless suspicion.

"What do I behold before me?" he asked himself, while he continued volubly and amiably to chatter to the "gentleman tourist" regarding the beauties which surrounded them. "Do I see a young and rich dupe?—an easy victim, from whom, by judicious squeezing, I may extract the honey of life, money? Or do I behold a prodigal and runaway son, who will require more careful manipulation? Or, lastly, do I behold a vile impostor? one of my own profession striving to pass himself for a gentleman? Whence that unusually short-cropped head of hair? From what card-sharper come those curious lines on his face, and from what ravenous bird of prey has he borrowed that acute expression of eye? Here is an opening for my genius—expanding, like a blush rose, to my grasp. Let me study—think—profit."

"The get-up is perfect," thought Ned, The Buttoner. "He does not suspect me, and is as good as booked. Here goes for a gently administered dose of flattery. Yes, sir," he added aloud, "the beauties you point out are indeed striking, but allow me to say that only one of intelligence, discernment, and education could have indicated them with such rapidity and ease. I wish indeed that, instead of being, as you seem, a simple citizen, you had adopted the profession of city guide. To have gone over this romantic city with you at my side would have been a pleasure for which I would willingly have paid liberally;" and the negligent young gentleman sighed pathetically, as if such a favour were beyond his reach.

"Sir, words fail to express the pleasure I also feel in your society," responded Penbank, placing his right hand with its tattered kid glove against his left breast, and bowing low. "And though usually otherwise employed, I would not object

to be your chaperon for any moderate sum you may choose to bestow upon me. He *is* a prig then?" he added to himself, "a vile thief, requiring a dupe, probably to smash some sinker, or pass some screaves, and does not know that I also am of the profession. Good! I will gently squeeze him of every real coin in his possession, and then trip him up and place him in M'Indoe's hands for the invariable couple of sovereigns. Oh, lucky chance that sent my feet wandering into Princes Street Gardens on this lovely morning!"

"Then, suppose we say half-a-sovereign a-day, with food, wine, and other little refreshments, the same as I myself enjoy, with perhaps a little present when we part?" joyfully cried Ned, The Buttoner.

"Sir, I am your most obedient servant," was the humble reply, given with another low bow.

"Poor simpleton!" thought Ned, The Buttoner. "And this is the man whose cunning was to be so much dreaded!—imposed upon as easily as a child. My task will be the simplest I ever took in hand. I think, sir," he added aloud, with a deferential smile, as he negligently removed the ash from his cigar against the stone balustrade of the terrace, "I think we may both congratulate ourselves on our fortunate meeting. My name is Edward Corbis, and at present I am residing in the — Hotel in Register Street."

"And mine is Penbank, Christian name, Simon, at your service," as politely and amicably responded the spy. "The name is well-known in at least one walk in literature—ahem! the police reports," he added, in an undertone. "Corbis? Corbis? Where have I heard that name before?" he pursued in thought. "There was one Ned, The Buttoner, of whom I used to hear, whose real name was Carpis, or something like it. Corbis is not greatly different; perhaps that clever strip-ling really stands before me. But what—oh what!—I may without vanity ask myself, shall all his cunning and skill avail against mine? It is to pit the weak straw against the massive oak. My villany is the massive oak, and shall come out of this strange contest serene and unshaken."

"Then suppose we begin at once with a little round before dinner?" suggested Corbis, moving out towards the cab-stand.

The proposal was at once agreed to. Corbis stepped into the ready vehicle, Penbank took his place like an orthodox city guide on the box, and the two specious rascals drove off, each thinking he had completely deceived the other, each smiling

sweetly into the other's eyes, and each meditating the treacherous trapping of the other upon the first favourable opportunity. The spectacle must have been a highly edifying one, more especially at the point where, before stepping into the cab, they each removed a glove to shake hands, and each pronounced himself the more obliged of the two. The drive included an airing round the Queen's Park, with various stoppages for refreshments, upon which occasions Corbis tried his best to undermine the wits of the spy with repeated doses of the strongest brandy. Vain hope! He might as well have poured it into an empty cask and expected to see it stagger. Simon Penbank chucklingly drank every drop of the liquor offered him, knowing perfectly for what object it was administered, and then took a mischievous delight in watching the other's dismay and astonishment at finding that the drink only brightened instead of dulling his well-seasoned brain. In the confusion attending the failure of this and other schemes, Corbis made one fatal mistake. By a mere overlook, in paying the cabman, he had passed two bad half-crown pieces—a slip which, though unnoticed at the time, was to return with overwhelming force on his head later in the day. Driving back to Register Street, they had dinner together, after which Corbis thought that he would do a little priming preparatory to drawing in the mouth of the net on his simple victim, and wrote and posted the following scrawl to me :—

“MR M'GOVAN.

“Dear Sir,—I have to warn you that Simon Penbank has bought a parcel of screaves, and intends to begin to pass them soon ; so be ready to pounce on him the moment you hear of the screaves.—Yours very truly,

“A THIEF.”

This business over, the “gentleman tourist” proposed about dusk a stroll along the principal streets, to which Simon Penbank rapturously agreed, though underneath his smiles he was grave enough.

“What can he be up to now?” he uneasily asked himself, “and why did he write a letter? Can there possibly be danger to me? The thought is too monstrous. But 'ware hawk! O Simon, my dearest and most beloved friend, Simon, if ever you were cunning, if ever you were preternaturally watchful, be so now!”

They walked a considerable distance, and at last found themselves opposite a flashy public-house at the west end. Penbank was ready to drop with thirst, as the other had

shrewdly guessed, and eagerly agreed to the following proposal :—

“Would you care for a refreshment, Mr Penbank? Ah, well, take that, and get one for yourself, while I enjoy my cigar outside; you need not hurry out again, but take care of the change;” and so saying, though with a hand that trembled slightly, Corbis placed a cleverly-forged one-pound note in the hand of the spy, and carelessly turned away.

For a moment Penbank’s insatiable crave for drink threw him off his guard; he seized the note, turned into the brightly shining palace of crystal and mirrors, and was about to open his mouth to give the order to one of the waiters, when a peculiar feeling—a strange want of crispness in the crackle of the bit of paper in his hand—arrested him on the spot. In an instant his tongue was stilled, the paper held up to the light, and then there broke over his face first a smile, and then a spasm of indignant fury. The forged note was crushed up in his hand, and he turned to stagger back towards the door.

“What!” he faintly gasped out. “Is it possible? Has it then really come to this? Do they actually think they can swindle me? Me! Penbank, Christian name Simon!—who have all the cunning of the united serpents of the universe—including that of the first serpent himself—the oldest, the captain of them all—in a condensed form in my wonderful brain. Monstrous, did I say?—it is incredible. Now for the vain fool who has dared to attempt it.”

Corbis, who had watched the whole proceeding with intense interest from the opposite side of the street—prepared in an emergency to make a run for it—now came out of his hiding-place as unconcerned as if nothing unusual had occurred.

“My dear sir—I might almost say friend,” began Penbank, with the sweetest of smiles, handing back the forged note, and bowing low, “I did not procure a refreshment. The note, I fear, is a bad one—nay, do not start, such rascality really does exist in the world—people are to be found who risk the making of such imitations and the passing of them. But, as I may be mistaken, your best plan would be to return the note to the person from whom you received it, or go to the bank and ask their opinion.”

With a deep curse inwardly, but a smiling and negligent exterior, Corbis took back the note, saying—

“Mr Penbank, you have my eternal gratitude. Who knows from what trouble you may have saved me by your skill and

experience?" and the two epitomes of rascality, hidden in smiles, warmly wrung each other by the hand.

The fight was now becoming hotter. Each was now cursing the other from the bottom of his heart, and out of this was welling a murderous hate, goading them on to last and decisive effort. The next movements in skill and address were worthy of a better cause. Corbis got together all the forged notes in his possession but one in a tight, compact roll, and managed to slip them unseen into Penbank's waistcoat pocket, and then prepared for instant action by getting rid of all the other bad money in his possession. In spite of his watchfulness, Penbank was for some time in ignorance of the transfer; but when he did make the discovery his course was swiftly decided. In passing along one of the darker streets, Corbis had handed him his cigar-case from which to select a weed, and in doing so Penbank very skilfully removed a cigar, left the roll of notes in its place, closed the case, and smilingly restored it to its owner accompanied with a profusion of thanks.

Corbis, thinking that all was now ready for the final blow, turned down to Princes Street, and there, at the busiest part of the street, and with a policeman in sight, he suddenly produced the solitary note he had reserved, and loudly accused Penbank of trying to palm upon him a false bank-note. A great crowd instantly collected about them, which swelled rapidly at the sight of the policeman standing between them. Penbank was seized, and the false note taken possession of, but he smilingly retorted that Corbis himself was the forger; that he had tried to induce him (Penbank) to pass a note at a certain public-house—a bit of treachery which he discovered only as he was about to tender the same—which the waiter at the place could swear; and that he had not a bundle of notes in his possession, or ever had.

"Search him! search him!" hotly replied Corbis; "I myself saw him put them into his waistcoat pocket."

But to his astonishment Penbank instantly turned out every one of his pockets, there and then proving beyond doubt that the notes were not in his possession. At this moment it happened that I was attracted to the spot, and, having the matter explained to me, I was just ordering both to be seized and taken to the Office, when Penbank suddenly shouted—

"He knows as well as I do that he has a bundle of forged notes, the same as the one in the policeman's hand, secreted in his cigar-case."

With a shower of protestations and oaths, Corbis tore out the cigar-case, triumphantly opened it, and then turned white as a sheet as the roll of false notes lay revealed !

Penbank smiled complacently, and nodded significantly to me, cheerfully rubbing his hands.

I produced a pair of handcuffs, but before I could snap them on the white wrists of Corbis, a cabman eagerly elbowed his way forward, and loudly accused Corbis of palming upon him two bad half-crowns, which he produced on the spot.

"The honest cabman is perfectly right," gravely affirmed Penbank ; "I myself was present at the moment and saw the money tendered, though most certainly unaware that it was mere sinker. Mr Corbis, *alias* Ned, The Buttoner, consider yourself nabbed."

The face of the sharper became livid with passion, and I started between them, fearing that he was about to spring upon the spy. But he only shouted out—"Simon Penbank, I will kill you for this !" and the next instant, with a dash, he was backwards through the crowd and tearing away through the darkness, with two policemen and half a streetful of people shouting in his wake.

At that part of Rose Street between Hanover Street and St David Street he was lost, and I found myself in the remains of the crowd and close to the panting spy, who was just parting from a professional thief, an old member of The Ruffian's gang. Penbank looked uncommonly grave.

"Never mind," I said cheerfully, "we'll get him again soon; and you too, Simon, if you are not more careful."

"I hope so—with all my heart, I hope so," he answered, with uncommon earnestness. "If you don't, he may get me. I tremble for the result. My valued life is in danger. Do you know what that man has just told me?"

I professed utter ignorance.

"Well, he says that that man visited lately the old shop of The Ruffian, on a pretence of perhaps taking it, but most likely to lift the stuff he has been using. He is just out of prison too ; and if The Ruffian and he are acting together, the whole may be a plot against me."

"Well, what then?"

"Well, what then?" furiously echoed Penbank, for once getting into a real rage. "Good God ! can you stand there seeing a fellow-man in jeopardy, his life not worth an hour's purchase, and coolly say, 'Well, what then?' I am a coward,

I admit it—a real, quaking coward. Life to me is a priceless gem. My cunning and skill are not trifling, but of what avail will they be against a *hidden* danger?” and, as he turned his white and dismayed face upon me, I could see that the hands fidgeting with his coat-lapel were really shaking with fear.

“Poh! Do your best to get him trapped again; that’s all the advice I can give you,” I said, as I turned away. “We’ll be only too glad to nip him up and put him out of harm’s way. Good-night!”

Thus I parted from him; but I scarcely expected to hear more of the man he dreaded. I thought he had received a wholesome fright, and would disappear from Edinburgh. And so he would have done; but with a fatal and blind rage he resolved first to settle with Penbank. A mere chance—a hurried conversation overheard—saved, I believe, the spy’s miserable life. Going down the Cowgate the night after the events I have narrated, Penbank was suddenly stopped by Nosie Mincher, who cautiously and mysteriously drew him into an entry, and related a short conversation which he had overheard between a well-known thief and another, in whose description Penbank instantly recognised Corbis. “Where does he sleep, then, if he never goes to a proper lodging?” Corbis had asked, after some inquiries regarding Penbank. “In the condemned land, in Blackfriars’ Wynd,” was the reply. “He sleeps alone, among some straw on the third flat. Every one else is afraid to go into the place lest it should fall.” “And when does he turn in?” earnestly continued Corbis. “Seldom before twelve” was the reply. “Ah! and allow half-an-hour for him to fall asleep; that will do,” returned Corbis, speaking more to himself than the other; and then they parted.

This information, and more of a more ominous nature, made Penbank nearly drop into his boots with terror; and finally sent him up the Old Fishmarket Close to the Office, where he demanded to see me in such an imperative tone and with such pallor and trembling that he was instantly admitted, when he implored me to save him, and incoherently related what had reached his ears. A few minutes’ close thinking gave me what I considered an excellent plan for capturing Corbis and putting an end to Penbank’s fears; and this plan he fervently agreed to, till he found that it involved the risking to a slight extent of his own person, when he instantly drew back.

“Consider, my dear Jamie, consider the swiftness of a knife wielded by his powerful arm; it might enter my body though

the whole staff of detectives were at my very elbow. No, think again; try some other plan which excludes me."

"I will not think of another plan; but I will put you out of all danger," I firmly returned; and rising, I took a pistol from a drawer, which I very carefully loaded before his eyes, and then placed at half-cock in his hands. "Keep that in your hand, ready cocked, and should he attempt to come closer than you desire, merely show it. But do not, for any sake, fire—except as a last resource."

Penbank pocketed the weapon with twinkling eyes, and after a few more words, slipped out of the Office by the back way and disappeared. Then one by one, M'Sweeny and myself, with two policemen in plain clothes, got down to Blackfriars' Wynd and into the boarded-up condemned land, through a broken window at the back; and after ascending to the third storey and discovering Penbank's bed of straw, we arranged ourselves in various hiding-places around, as Penbank had directed. The place was very dark and comfortless, all the sashes having been removed from the windows, and the rooms being lighted only by the straggling glimpses of the moon, the lights in the adjoining houses having been by that time nearly extinguished. But Penbank, who was away on a tour through the neighbouring streets and wynds, to act as a lure to the game, fortunately did not keep us long in waiting. The sound of his footsteps below first hushed our whispers and sent us cowering into our hiding-places, and then the man himself entered, and removing his hat and gloves, and carefully cocking the pistol and concealing it and his right hand in the straw, lay down and composed himself to sleep.

There was then a long pause, and the first sound that broke it was startlingly near. Corbis had ascended the stairs, but had first removed his boots, and so was actually within the doorway of the room before we noticed his figure. At this moment the gliding figure suddenly started and paused, and, looking over at the straw, I saw Penbank start up from his rude bed, leaning on the hand concealing the pistol under the straw, and heard him sharply demand—

"Who's there? and what do you want?"

The still figure found voice now, hoarse with rage and concentrated hate; and the arm flashing through the air clutched a gleaming knife, plainly visible in the streaking moonshine.

"It's me, Ned, The Buttoner, and I want your life!" he cried. "You are alone and trapped, and I mean to kill you,

and then board you up as food for the rats!" He flew forward, but was instantly checked by the hand of Penbank rising swiftly out of the straw, holding the cocked pistol levelled full at his face.

"Stand back, or you're a dead man!" he shouted, so suddenly and so shrilly that the other staggered back a few paces, as if by instinct. "Listen, fool! I am a coward—I shiver at the very look of that glittering knife in your hand, and would sooner jump from Salisbury Craigs than risk closing with you at this moment. But I can shoot; I can fire a pistol; and I will do it, without the slightest compunction, the moment you come close enough to render missing your brains an impossibility. Wretched, miserable impostor, you don't deserve the name of villain. As a thief, I despise you; as a sharper, you are nowhere; and now you shall reap the bitter fruits of your audacity. Know that I am not alone. Turn your eyes to the right, and you will there see a closet door: behind that door lurks that terror to thieves, my esteemed friend, James M'Govan. Look to your left; within that aperture lurks M'Sweeny, the detective, who, though not so talented, is really not without *clutching power*. Look behind you if you choose, and you will see other two but waiting my signal to pin you to the ground. Ready! seize him!—all of you!" Before the imperative and unexpected shout had died away we had sprung forth; pinned the stupefied Corbis on every side; and snapped the hand-cuffs on his wrists. Then Penbank rose, pistol in hand, and indignantly resumed—

"Trapped? How dare you, sir, apply such a word to me? I never was trapped in my life; I am too skilled, too cunning, too wise. It is you who are trapped; and if my friends can wait a moment," and he stooped down and methodically resumed his hat and gloves, "why—I will see you as far as the Police Office."

To describe the pallid fury, rage, and hate that convulsed the whole form of Corbis as we led him away would be utterly impossible for me. Completely crestfallen, cowed, and stupefied, he was locked up on the double charge of attempting to pass forged notes and counterfeit coin, and attempting the life of one of her Majesty's lieges. When his trial came he pleaded guilty, and was sentenced to seven years' imprisonment.

"The most inadequate sentence," coolly remarked Penbank audibly in the prisoner's hearing, as he was removed, "to which it has ever been my painful misfortune to listen."

A SPOT OF BLOOD.

A SHORT distance south of Edinburgh, on the brow of the rising grounds, there stands a quiet little village, which boasts of only one tavern. It is a sunny little spot, where people take life easily, and grow to be old men and women, and where events like the following occur only once in a century, and then cause more excitement and confusion than would the overthrow of an empire in the great world outside. The village has grown into existence on either side of the public road; and along this road the comfortable and canny proprietor of the solitary tavern was gazing curiously, one evening in August, shading his eyes from the full blaze of the sun as he did so. What attracted his attention was a tramp limping wearily and painfully towards him; though why this tramp interested him particularly, it would have puzzled him to tell; for tramps were as common on that road as the dead leaves that came bowling past his door in autumn. The dazzling blaze of the sunlight was between them, and that to some extent acted as a screen to the approaching tramp. Had the stranger been a gentleman in appearance, the landlord, of course, would at once have retired to allow him either to enter unembarrassed or to pass on; but no landlord would ever expect a weary and worn thing like that to enter a tavern, except, perhaps, to beg, so he stared on unabashed. Besides, the publican had a deeper interest in the stranger. He had a good memory for faces, and the first glimpse at that of the tramp had given him the idea that he had seen it before—happier, rounder, and less aged, and with no grey in the dark hair, but the same face—and he wished to decide time and place before the tramp trailed by and were lost to sight.

But the man did not trail past. He walked straight up to the tavern door, nodded slightly, and attempted to push by the landlord into the house. The proprietor moved slowly in to await the stranger's commands, scanning the features keenly, and uncertain whether to serve him or not.

The stranger seated himself familiarly in a little nook behind the window, and stretched himself out with a long sigh.

"I want something to eat ; a bit of cold meat, or bread and cheese—anything you have handy—and a glass of beer. I am very tired."

The publican moved slowly to execute the command, and lingered over the cutting of the meat. The other seemed to read the signs like a flash, for he roughly drew out a handful of money, saying—

"Be quick ! I have money to pay for it."

The meal was very nimbly and swiftly placed before him ; and then the landlord turned off the suspicion with a remark about the weather.

"Yes, it is hot," said the stranger. "I have felt it to-day ; and I'm not so strong either."

"Have you come far, sir?" deferentially inquired the publican, who had now taken the measure of his customer, and decided that he was no ordinary tramp.

The other stopped in his eating, looked the publican full in the face in a curious dreamy fashion, and then sighed out—

"Yes, a long way—a matter of sixteen or seventeen thousand miles."

The landlord caught his breath, and looked still more earnestly into the stranger's grizzled face. There was an odd ring in the voice which took his memory backwards into times gone by.

"Ah ! maybe you've been in Australia?" he remarked, anxious to hear the tones of the man's voice again.

"I have, and a good many more places as well," answered the tramp thoughtfully, resting and playing with the point of the knife on the hard deal table before him. "I've been a wanderer on the face of the earth, but I am weary of it now, and have come back at last. Don't you know me, Bob Mackintosh?" and in looking up the stranger smiled faintly for the first time.

"I do seem to know your face and your voice a little, but I see so many faces," returned Mackintosh, with trembling eagerness. "Who are you?"

"David Gardner."

"Never!" The start of the landlord was real and unaffected. "Good lord ! man, they said you were dead seven—ay, ten years ago."

"I know that. I was glad of it, too, at the time, for I

thought I was dead to this country and all in it for ever. But you see for yourself that the report was not true."

"Yes; but your wife—" the landlord hesitatingly returned, and then he stopped uneasily.

"Well, out with it; what of her?" calmly rejoined the stranger, repressing sternly a quiver of interest which had crept into his tones.

"She's married again—been this eight or nine years."

"I heard that too," quietly returned the stranger, taking a sip at the beer before him. "To James Neilson, too, the man whom she always hated, and of whom I was foolish enough to be jealous at one time. Well, I don't blame her, or him either. Perhaps they're happier together than ever we were."

"They do seem happy; a quiet, even-going pair," rejoined Mackintosh.

"But she is my wife for all that!" quickly observed Gardner, with a twinge of agony in his tone and expression. "All the laws in the world cannot separate man and wife—at least, till the man is a great deal worse than I have been."

Mackintosh remained gravely silent.

"I know what you're thinking of," said Gardner, rather bitterly. "You're thinking of how cruelly I used her; and of the stories which went about that I killed my own bairn in my passion. Perhaps you heard, too, that I got into trouble out yonder, and was sentenced to seven years on the roads. Well, there's some truth in it all." His voice was quivering unmistakably now, and the words came out with something like a groan. "I have been a scoundrel, and have come home broken-down and useless. Yet I mean to go and see her; I am her husband yet. She may spit upon me, despise me, hound me off if she so please; but there is one thing she cannot do—quench the love for her that still burns here;" and he smote his breast sharply. "I have tried for twelve long years to root it out, tried to learn to hate her, but it was like fighting with fate—I could not do it. Yes, I should like to see her. You see, Bob, she is burnt into my heart, and will remain there till this weary struggle is over;" and he tremblingly covered his face with his hands, and allowed his head to sink on the table.

There was a silence after this, broken only by the buzzing of the flies against the window close to him, and the placing or adjusting of the tumblers, which Mackintosh had gravely begun to polish.

"Yours has been a strange life," said the publican a last, not with coldness or unkindness, but sadly and feelingly.

"It has; I have drifted over all the world. The passion for wandering is pretty well worn out of me now," wearily responded the other, "and they say there is no place like home. I used to think so when the ship was trailing over the blue sea at night, with all asleep below, and the clear stars shining out above me. I don't think I'll live long; so I thought I'd come here."

"It'll be an awful blow to Neilson," said Mackintosh; "and to her, too, perhaps. Yet I don't know; women are strange beings, and you never know when you have them or when you haven't."

"Right, Bob! I'm going to find that out;" and Gardner rose and brushed his knees with more alacrity and firmness than he had yet shown. "But just one thing for auld lang syne: don't mention to any one for a while about me being here. It would only rouse the gossips and bring a mob about the house. Let me do the thing quietly in my own way, and let them discover the truth as they can. I may get away from the place before they know aught about it."

He shook Mackintosh by the hand, walked firmly to the door, and was gone. Outside, the sunset had got into a glowing red mass in the west, and as he stepped across the road and down a lane opposite, he appeared to vanish into this fire. Down and along the slope he went, and then a single cottage caught his eye with two figures in front, which spectacle pulled him up, panting and holding hard at his breast. The door was open facing the red sunset, a man sat smoking by the porch, in his shirt sleeves, with a newspaper lying at his feet, and a woman stood in the open door, looking westward, and shading her eyes from the deep glow of the heavens. The wanderer trailed softly up the path, after the first quick start, and his long shadow crossed the pair before they were aware of his approach. The sudden gloom brought the eyes of the pair round; the wanderer stretched himself to his full height; and then the woman screamed out and staggered shudderingly back against the lintel of the cottage door.

"David!" It was all she said, but the simple word made the wanderer quiver and totter as if about to drop. The other dropped his pipe smash on the ground, and rose white as a ghost, gasping out the one word—

"Gardner!"

"Yes, David Gardner," slowly repeated the wanderer, fighting with himself for power to speak firmly and coolly. "You have not at least forgotten my name, wife! I am here; not dead, but back to my old home. I am tired of wandering."

But the woman, though gazing at him with a kind of fearful fascination, shrank from him steadily till she was well within the doorway.

"What do you want?" she at last harshly demanded, with a desperate effort. "You know that you are forever dead to me. What do you want?"

"Let me come in and I will tell you," was the husky reply. "I don't wish to be seen yet, and I am not so strong as I was twelve years ago. Don't look scared and frightened, man," he added, as Neilson followed him into the house and shut the door. "I mean no ill to you, or to her either, for that matter. But you know she is my wife; you both know that."

"They said you were killed—shot among some chained convicts in revolt out in Australia—I read it myself," hoarsely breathed the woman, still shrinking in abhorrence. "Why have you come back, like a blight or a curse? Why has the greedy earth swallowed all but you?"

"I wish I knew—I wish I knew!" groaned the wanderer, clenching his hands on the knob of his stick till the sinews and veins stood out like hard cords. "Something drew me; something which I could not resist. I have fought against it all these years. I was shot at, as you read, but not killed. 'Twould have been better so, but I was spared; and at last when I found something always pulling me here, I thought that perhaps before I died you might want to see me, and perhaps forgive—"

He broke down there a little ashamed of his huskiness and emotion, but the woman took up his words with a wild swoop.

"Forgive! Ay, I may forgive, but I shall never forget. Did you think I could forget that that cruel hand—that iron fist—killed my bairn? Oh! I could have forgiven much; I could almost have kissed you for tearing my heart out; but my bairn—my sweet, wee innocent angel? Never! never!"

The wanderer shivered, and taking off his cap, showed a head already prematurely bald and thickly sprinkled with grey. He wiped the sweat from his forehead and temples, and then huskily got out—

"She was mine too, Marion; remember she was mine too. I did not mean to hurt her; not even to strike her."

"But you killed her?"

"Ay, they said so, and I believed it, for I never saw her more. I used to go and sit by her grave after you left me, but that was only a hollow mockery; I could never feel that my lassie was there. She was gone; far away."

A tear rolled down his cheek unheeded. The woman seemed to harden as he melted.

"Devil! and you can sit there telling me all that," she vengefully exclaimed. "You can dare to come near me and call me wife, knowing that you killed her. Out! I can never in this world or the next be aught to you."

"I feared so; I always feared so," sighed the wanderer. "I don't ask you to be my wife. I will go as I have come, and never trouble you more. But I had more than you to draw me here. My bairn—the other little one—is he alive?"

"No, no!—dead—dead too, like my happiness and my love!" and the hand of the woman, fiercely driven through the air as the hot blast of words came forth, almost caught him on the cheek.

"Dead?—dead too?" he echoed in a hollow tone. "Ah, well, perhaps I have deserved that too. 'As ye sow, so also shall ye reap.' I heard that long ago—at the Sunday School, I think—and I've never been able to get it out of my head. I think it's true; yes, there's something in my life and heart that screams out that it's true."

"Yes, you sowed misery and desolation here," cried the wife, sharply striking her breast, "but I—I have reaped the pain, and grief, and emptiness. I never forgave you till I thought you dead, and now I think I feel the hate coming back again to curse you as before."

"Nay, don't curse me! I'm sufficiently cursed already;" and the wanderer started from his seat and suddenly bent forward to place his hand on her mouth.

Quick 'as lightning, as he made the movement, her hand flew out and struck him in the face. The blood spouted from his nose as he staggered back, and one splash of it dropped on the sleeve of her print dress, where it spread and dulled into a spot as large as a half-crown.

She was sorry for the blow immediately after, but he made no attempt to retaliate or even reprove her. The dusk of the gloaming began to creep over the three, but none attempted to strike a light. The wanderer quietly staunched the blood flowing from his nostrils, merely saying—

"I am not so strong as I once was. You need not have done that, Marion, for I meant you no harm; and you know you once loved me."

"Yes, but that's gone, years ago; you buried it with your own hands," was the fierce rejoinder. "What do you mean to do now? Turn us out? I know that the house is yours, and that unless as your wife I have no claim to it, and that claim I never shall put forward."

"I hardly expected that you would—yet you are mine by law," sadly returned the wanderer. "I cannot force you, for that would bring me no peace, and it was peace I sought. No, I'll leave you undisturbed. The world need never know that I'm alive, and you can please yourselves as to whether you will allow your marriage to rest as valid. The cottage you can have; it matters not to me. I'll perhaps inhabit a much smaller one before long. But let me have one favour. Before I left I buried some trinkets in a mug, in the garden behind; deep down where no one would get them. Don't start; they are not of much value; only a trinket or two, a lock of my poor lassie's hair, and a book of my mother's. Give me a light and a spade, and I'll take them out myself."

Neilson went to a corner for a spade which he handed to the wanderer in silence. The wife merely said—

"Take what you want, do what you please, but don't come near me or touch me with those hands. I always think I see blood on them!"

"There is blood on them, but it is my own," moodily rejoined Gardner, taking out the handkerchief with which he had staunched the bleeding of his nose, and wiping them white. "I wish I could rub everything off my mind as easy."

Neilson lit a candle and bore it to the back of the house, shielding it from the wind with his hands; and then when they were all out in the pitchy darkness, Gardner put out his hand for the candle.

"Let me hold it," said Neilson; "you will have enough to do to dig, and the wind is rising."

"I will hold it myself or not use it at all," sharply replied Gardner, with a suspicious look. "Do you think I'm going to dig up a treasure?"

"I don't know, and don't care," defiantly answered Neilson, losing his temper. "I only wish to help you."

"Ay, into my grave," hoarsely and chokingly retorted the other, raising his voice. "You could both see me there with

pleasure. Take care! take care! Remember I can take your wife from you."

"And I can kill you," cried the woman, with unguarded shrillness, forgetting that they were now in the open air, and within ear-shot of several other cottages. "Don't tempt me, David Gardner. I feel murder to-night in my heart, which till you came was peaceful as the grave."

These words were distinctly heard in the adjacent cottage by a man already in bed. He started up at the words, and then hurriedly remarked to his wife—

"Can it be possible? Can Gardner be alive after all, and come back to claim his wife? I know a stranger arrived to-night, and came direct to the cottage. I think I'll get up and have a peep."

"Lie still and mind your own business," counselled his wife, and like a sensible man he obeyed.

At the north end of the garden, however, stood a cottage occupied at the gable end by an old woman as her sleeping place. This old woman, sitting up in bed in the dark, looked directly out on Neilson's garden, and was astonished to see a man cross, in a stooping posture, as if searching for something, and bearing in one hand a spade, and in the other a lighted candle. The face was matted, fierce and grizzled, and in the uncertain glow of the candle looked ghoulis and awful. The man stopped at last in his search, and began to dig. He dug deep and wide, and gradually got down in the ground till only his body was visible above. The candle fluttered and sputtered in the wind at the edge of the hole, which the horrified old woman began to think looked like a grave; and while the strange worker was bending down into the ground as if to rake for something with his hands, the unwilling spectator was startled to observe two slinking figures, those of a man and a woman, creeping up behind the man in a stealthy, murderous fashion that almost made her scream in horror. Closer and closer they noiselessly drew to the solitary worker, till a hitch of one of their feet against something on the ground drew his attention. In an instant he had started up with a wild imprecation, and swung back the spade over his shoulder as if determined to defend himself to the last, and then with tantalizing suddenness the light was blown out by the blustering wind, and all became invisible. Fierce words, hot and angry, the old woman heard, with something like a struggle and a thud, and then she thought she dimly made out the form of a man refilling the hole, and

patting it flat on the top with the spade ; but after this even he disappeared, and she was left to speculate in itching curiosity and troublesome fear till morning.

The next day was not far advanced when a whisper began to circulate through the village. No one could say what had happened, but two or three had stories and observations to compare, and the result was not very flattering to the Neilsons. Hearing these reports, the publican boldly avowed that he had seen and conversed with Gardner, that he had left him with the intention of visiting his wife, and that he had never after seen or heard of him. Others saw Gardner arrive at the cottage, some heard high words and threats of murder, and the old woman gave an account of what she had seen in the garden behind the house. As usual, every one heard the suspicions but the suspected, and when the first prying neighbour appeared at the cottage, the Neilsons made their first grand mistake—they denied ever having seen or heard of Gardner, or knowing anything about him. This bold reply was no sooner reported abroad in the village than the utmost excitement prevailed. Groups gathered at every corner ; men neglected their work to discuss the best means to be adopted to unravel the dark mystery ; and at last, at the request of these self-elected commissioners of public good, Mackintosh, the publican, paid a visit to the cottage in person.

"You say that David Gardner, your first husband, never came here, and yet I find that after he left my place last night he was traced direct to this, his own cottage," he searchingly remarked, when he had been accommodated with a seat. "The thing is growing serious, and everybody is talking of it. You know I have always been your friend ; out with the truth."

Neilson, who, singularly enough, had not gone out to his work that day, and seemed both pale and agitated, made no reply ; but his wife flushed up and said—

"I mean to say no more than I have said ; and as for the chattering gossips of the place, I don't care that for them !" and she defiantly snapped her thumb and finger in the man's face in a way which exposed the broad, round splash of blood on her sleeve.

"What's that?" cried Mackintosh, with fresh suspicion, indicating the blood-stain. "A spot of blood?"

The woman paled and started, and unguardedly spoke out.

"Oh, that? yes, it's blood; I had not time to wash it out."

"I daresay not," dryly returned Mackintosh. "You'd better look out for a visit from the police, that's all I can tell you."

Both man and wife became more ghastly than ever, but the woman spoke first, and with some indignation in her tones—

"What! can we not keep our own secrets? Must everything we say and do be made known to a lot of scandal-mongers? What good can it do, eh? Clear my name? I don't care whether my name is clear or no. I have to bear my own suffering, so I may surely keep my own secret."

"Where is Gardner now?" sternly demanded the publican.

"I don't know! gone for ever, I hope."

"What! Dead?"

"Ay—to me."

"Then you admit that he has been here?"

"I admit nothing. He is not here now; and never will be."

"I begin to believe so myself. I was his friend as well as yours, remember. And he was not nearly so bad as people thought and said. I want to know what you have done with him, where you have hid him. What was it that took place in the garden behind the house last night?"

Both stared at the questioner now with open eyes, but more in surprise than fear.

"You don't answer that," suspiciously continued Mackintosh. "Still less, I suppose, you will care to tell what you meant by screaming out—'And I can kill you! Don't tempt me, David Gardner! I feel murder to-night in my heart, which, till you came, was peaceful as the grave!'"

"Is it possible?" cried the wife in a strange, hushed tone. "Am I really suspected of putting him out of the way—murdering him?"

"You are; it is in everybody's mouth; and if you wish to free yourself, you had better say where he is."

"But I myself do not know," was the agitated reply. "He is gone never to come back, and I know not where he is to be found. But this must be seen to; I will advertise for him; I will go in to Edinburgh and set the detectives on his track. I will bring him back, if it's only to clear my name."

She went to the door as she spoke, and was surprised to find that quite a crowd had gathered outside, a crowd so excited as to give out a groaning howl the moment that she showed her face.

"They can't touch me! they daren't lay a finger on me," she feverishly iterated, as she tremblingly tugged on a bonnet and shawl. "They must prove a murder, and find the body before they can injure me. They surely can't suspect me when I'm going for a detective to hunt for him; and as for the garden, they are welcome to turn it up from end to end, if that will satisfy them that he is not buried in it."

In spite of every counsel, she would go out and force her way through the crowd. An ominous howl burst from the people, and cries of "Down with her!" "Seize her!" "She's gauna bolt!" "Look at the blude on her sleeve!" were showered on her from every side. The whole mob, thus shouting and yelling, followed her to the end of the village, in spite of her tears and entreaties, and the cries of murder were fast becoming unbearable, when one of the country coaches bound for Edinburgh rattled out of the village and through their midst. In a moment, with quick decision, Marion Gardner had hailed the conveyance, and stepped inside, whither she was followed by a chorus of groans and a shower of stones and earth; and then the driver whipped up the horses, and, to her intense relief, the crowd was left far behind.

In at the Central Office in Edinburgh, I was rather surprised when the scared-looking woman burst in upon me with the strange request to try and trace the man she was suspected of murdering. I carefully took down every particular, as I have given them; but the task allotted to me might have proved no light one, and the poor wife might have remained for ever under a dark suspicion had not that frequent aid of the puzzled detective—accident—come to my assistance. A man had been picked up in the street early that morning, lying almost insensible in a pool of blood, and had been conveyed by the policeman of the beat first to the District Station, and then to the Infirmary, where it was ascertained that he had ruptured a bloodvessel, and would require much care and quiet to bring him round. The description of this tramp, and some articles found in his possession, tallied so closely with that of Gardner, and the articles which he was said to have dug up from the garden attached to Neilson's cottage, that I had the woman sent for, and taken into the ward to look at him while he slept. With much agitation and many tears, she identified the gaunt, white shadow of a man as David Gardner; and then to our surprise she proffered the strange request of being allowed to remain and nurse him. This, under the cir-

cumstances, was deemed inexpedient, chiefly on account of the patient requiring perfect freedom from excitement; but she seemed to console herself by calling regularly every day to inquire as to his progress. At last he was well enough to be told of her calls, and the trouble which his disappearance had brought upon her, when he instantly volunteered to go out to the village and publicly state her entire freedom from blame. The day after this, she called, accompanied by Neilson, and was admitted to an interview with the convalescent patient, who was to leave the hospital next day. It was an affecting scene, and there were tears all-round. Gardner took the proffered hand of his wife quietly and sadly, but only reached forward and placed it in that of Neilson.

"I have no right to her; I am not worthy of such a woman," he huskily ejaculated. "She is yours, Neilson, and I resign all claim to her. Though I am not killed, as the people said, you may consider me the same as dead from this day."

Neilson turned to leave the room with his wife; but now a curious revulsion appeared to have come over the woman, for with a wrench she snatched back her hand, and, rushing to Gardner's side, dropped on her knees, kissing his hand.

"No, no!" she cried; "this—this is my husband, the father of my bairns! David, forgive me; I cannot part with you!"

Gardner started wildly to his feet, trembling in every limb with the sudden agitation.

"But I am bad and cruel, and I killed—" he was beginning, when his wife tenderly placed a hand on his lips.

"Hush! she is in heaven! Perhaps she sees us now, and rejoices;" and the wife's head went down on his breast and rested there. "I shall find shelter and support and sweet rest here till I die!"

Neilson took it much more coolly than I should have expected, and appeared content to have the cottage left to him in lieu of his wife.

Gardner and his wife left a week after for Australia, whence I have received letters more than once, which speak of a quiet and peaceful life, strangely contrasting with the troubles and fierce contention which went before.

THE HORSE WYND FIRE.

“HUGH M'INDOE, when I am free I shall burn you alive!” had been the last words of The Ruffian when led off to prison; and it was not likely that the vow would be forgotten. The most dangerous of wild beasts, the most ferocious of wild elephants, are those which live alone, in silence and solitude, apart from the herd; and, in a human aspect of things, it was exactly so with The Ruffian. He was a shadow; saw no one; conversed with no one; and showed nothing of the aims and aspirations working in his brain, but wolfish ferocity when crossed, and an insatiable greed for money.

Curious to know as much of our friend's plans for the future as was likely to be indicated by his movements, we had him watched, and breathed a sigh of relief when he took train for Glasgow. We might have known better. The journey was a mere blind. Common sense and ordinary experience might have taught us that being a shadow, whom we had rudely dragged into the light of day, The Ruffian's first object would be to again ensconce himself behind a cloud, whence he could work in security and comfort. The police in Glasgow were duly apprised of the valuable acquisition to their society, and notified his arrival in return; but after a few days they reported his sudden disappearance. He was gone, leaving not a trace behind; and we naturally looked for him in Edinburgh. Again we were hasty. It was believed that in different hides over the country The Ruffian possessed money which he touched only under the greatest necessity; so, though we found no traces of his presence and handiwork, we were rash to conclude him therefore absent. He was almost wealthy, and, when goaded on by the desire for vengeance, could afford to live for months or even years in idleness. But, if rich, it may be asked, why did he not retire? Why, indeed? Why does the unwary traveller not stop when the Jack-o'-lantern has lured him the first step into the marsh that swallows him? Why does the moth continue to dart frantically at the candle

light which is to scorch the life out of it? Why does the gambler stake and stake, in his desperation and excitement, till all his wealth is gone, and only an open grave yawns before him? Candidly, I don't know why; yet I know that these things are done; and thus the world, with its crimes and sins and sorrows, surges onward towards eternity.

"My dear friend, I must warn you," said Simon Penbank, who, in real terror had made his way up to M'Indoe's garret in the Horse Wynd to detail these facts to the sick man. "There is a report that The Ruffian intends forming a new gang, with himself as leader, and shrouded even more effectually than before from danger."

"Good! then there is work for me in the world yet," cried M'Indoe, flushing up, and raising himself on his elbow, with the old fire gleaming in his eyes. "I'm not yet to die."

"To die!" echoed Penbank, in real alarm. "For God's sake do not speak of such a thing. You are wanted on earth, imperatively wanted. There is danger—a terrible danger—and to ME! Let me entreat you to rouse yourself; think of all your wrongs, and the monster who created them moving about in freedom, and let nothing deter you from again landing him in prison. Then, and then only, can I be safe. He will probably begin with you; he may even succeed in accomplishing your death: what then? To you that is nothing. The dire calamity comes when he turns his attention to me. Alas! why am I ever doomed to suffer for the crimes of others? My dear Hughie, try to think; remember that you are really all that stands between me and the horrible prospect of a deep and silent grave!"

"Do not fear; I shall not die while The Ruffian lives!" firmly returned M'Indoe, taking no notice of the selfishness of his satellite. "The very thought that he is back in Edinburgh has given me fresh life."

"I rejoice to hear it," replied Penbank, for once speaking the truth, and looking into the pale and sunken cheeks with a dawning of hope. "And I need not say that, till he is safely juggled again, you may command me in anything free of personal danger. Do you require a skilled medical man? I am ready to fly to the other end of the city to summon his attendance. I have now a deep interest in your life and health; let me entreat you to prize and cherish these blessings to the utmost in your power. If ever you were on your guard, be so now. The Ruffian will this time strike suddenly, and perhaps

at a moment when you think yourself most secure. If he succeed, I tremble for my own life. And this is the return for my kindness in helping criminals to their just deserts. Why cannot the cruel world let me alone? I seek no man's life, yet they seek mine;" and in his virtuous indignation Simon Penbank brought his hand down with a ringing thud on the table by the bedside.

"Will you help me to trap him?" shortly demanded M'Indoe, interrupting the smooth flow of words with a gesture of impatience.

"Will a drowning man seize the outstretched hand, or the life-buoy that floats within his reach?" eagerly returned Penbank. "The monster is not safe out of prison, terrifying peaceable old men like me. Why the d—l did they let him out?" and his eye ran round the room with an aggrieved expression, as if he was demanding an answer from a listening and breathless world.

"Ye'd better go and ask that outside," shortly observed Nosie Mincher, who had been watching his master's face, and now saw him sink back wearily in bed and close his eyes. "I'll watch in the house, and you keep yer eyes a-goin' outside, and then see if we don't have the best of it in the end;" and with a wink and a shove he landed Penbank on the wooden stair outside.

But at the very moment when this conversation took place a singular accumulation was being made in the two rooms directly beneath M'Indoe's garret. The house, which was rickety and out of repair to an extent almost uninhabitable, had been let as a kind of workshop or store-room to a tenant who was hardly ever visible. A few of the neighbours did afterwards assert that they saw the man; that these glimpses were always obtained at night, and generally in the darkness of the stair; that the man appeared very old and poor, and broken down with infirmities; and that he always, without exception, carried under his arm a leathern bag or valise. One even asserted that the "old" man had dropped the bag in her hearing on the lower stone stair, and that it gave out a sound as if it had contained merely a bundle of sticks; and another distinctly testified to having noticed a strange odour, like that of turpentine or naphtha, proceeding from the two rooms; but, unfortunately, all these statements were not made till long after the mischief had been done. And so, by little and by little, the two rooms were filled with cut sticks from the small leather bag, and the

whole well saturated with turpentine and naphtha preparatory to The Ruffian's grand finishing stroke.

M'Indoe, of course, believed his enemy to be at that time at a safe distance from himself, if indeed he were in the city at all; and in this, as I have to show presently, he was not far wrong, for The Ruffian certainly did not *reside* in the two rooms. He used them steadily and unflinchingly for the purpose in view—nothing more.

One hot, sultry night in August, a strange incident occurred which very nearly shook M'Indoe's faith in his indefatigable apprentice, and at the same time forced upon Nosie the melancholy conviction that at last his benefactor's mind was becoming unhinged. About seven o'clock Nosie entered the garret and asked permission to go to the theatre with an order which had been forced upon him by a bill-deliverer in the street. The request was very readily granted by the half-waking invalid; but then M'Indoe roused himself, put back the bed-curtain from in front of his face, and quietly asked—

"Why did you not answer me just now when I spoke to you?"

"Answer ye?" cried Nosie, staring curiously into his master's widely-opened eyes. "What do ye mean? I never heard ye speak till now, and I'm this minute in."

"I know you are, but I mean *before*—about ten minutes ago, when you came in and walked out again."

"Ten minutes ago?—came in and walked out again?" echoed poor Nosie, quite aghast. "I haven't been near the place for an hour and a half."

"That's a lie!" shouted M'Indoe, fiercely and hotly, starting up on his elbow and glaring into the amazed and tearful face of his apprentice. "Is it possible that you can lie to me? I say you came into this room about ten minutes ago, and after crossing the room and doing something here among my medicine bottles, you stole back across the floor like a thief, left the room, and softly closed the door, without replying, when I said, 'Is that you, Nosie, lad?'"

"O Hughie!" groaned poor Nosie, clasping his hands, with the tears standing thick in his eyes; "I'm an awful bad 'un, and you've been very kind to me, and p'raps I sort o' deserve an awful whopping; strike me if ye like, but don't say that I'd try to deceive ye. I'm tryin' to pray at nights now, and spell through a bit of the Bible; and if I'm not tellin' ye the truth now, may God strike me dead afore ye. Somebody else might have been in, but it wasn't me."

"Who else would dare to enter my house?" fiercely returned the reformed thief. "But no matter; it is what I must look for," he bitterly added; "treachery on every side. Would to God I were once more on my feet!"

Nosie softly retired to the window, where he sat down in silence, trying to wipe away the tears as imperceptibly as possible.

"Poor Hughie," he sighed, with a glance towards the stern figure sinking back in the bed, "he's givin' way at last. He'll go mad altogether p'r'aps, and then they'll want to take him away from me and shut him up in the asylum. Oh dear, wot's to become o' me now?" and another snuffle and dabble of tears followed the poor lad's reflection.

There was silence for some minutes, and then M'Indoe, without opening his eyes or moving, said—

"Give me my medicine and go; perhaps you will wash the lie from your lips before you come in again. Well, well! I care not now how soon the end comes; it would be too much to expect peace now."

To these bitter remarks Nosie made no reply, but crossed the room and poured out the medicine, which the other swallowed without a word. But the moment the glass was empty, a glare of suspicion crossed the sick man's face. For an instant he sniffed at the empty glass, and then it was hurled with terrific force against the opposite wall, and smashed into a thousand fragments.

"Curse you! you've poisoned me!" he shouted, making a vain attempt to seize the startled lad by the throat, and then sinking back with a groan of disappointment. "You've put something into it—I know you have. Out with the truth now! I'm not too ill to detect the taste of a new drug."

"O Hughie, you're awful ill, or ye wouldn't speak to me like that," piteously replied Nosie. "Tell me, shall I go for the doctor, or read a bit to you, or sing ye a nice song, or do anything to make ye feel sort o' easy and soothed like?"

"Soothed like! you cursed traitor," gasped M'Indoe, sinking back, but keeping his eyes fixed on his apprentice's face. "Get out of the house this instant, and don't come back unless you like. I'm tired of this;" and so agitated and determined did he appear that for his sake Nosie took down his scrap of a cap and reluctantly retired.

"I can't go to the theatre now," he sadly muttered to himself, as he descended the stairs with slow steps and a heavy

heart. "I wish I knew what to do. If I could see M'Govan, p'raps he might tell me. He ain't afraid of mad 'uns, and knows how to speak soft and kind to them, so as not to irritate them. I'll go and hunt him up, if he's in town."

While Nosie went wandering sadly over the town in the red gloaming, hoping to meet me and get my advice, M'Indoe's suspicions and fears were on the increase. A dull insensibility or heavy drowsiness began to creep over his faculties, which no effort on his part could shake off.

"I could swear there was opium or laudanum in that dose he gave me; I tasted it and smelt it the moment the glass had left my lips," he groaned, tossing about in bed in the vain attempt to keep his eyes open. "I cannot lie here any longer in suspense. My life is worth little, but it would be hard to die just as The Ruffian has regained his freedom. Perhaps he is at the bottom of this treachery. Out, out! I must breathe the fresh air or die!"

With a desperate effort he managed to throw himself over the bedside and crawl across the floor through the thickening gloom towards the door. But the door, when he raised himself to grasp the handle, resisted every effort he was capable of making, and he dropped back on the floor with a curse and a groan.

"It is fastened on the other side," he hazily muttered to himself, drawing his hand across his brow to try and clear the clouds from his brain. "Yet how can that be? The key hangs up in its usual place; Nosie did not pause a moment outside, and could not have done this. Am I really going mad after all? Nosie looked as if he thought so. Is it possible that some one else entered the room while he was out? Another effort; no, it is roped in some way outside. I'll sleep now, and when Nosie returns he will explain all;" and the rest of his strength was expended in a blind effort to crawl back to bed, but before half the distance was accomplished he had dozed off into a heavy slumber.

Shortly after this, some one in a house in Argyle Square, looking down from one of the back windows, noticed a thick wreathing of smoke issuing from the windows directly beneath M'Indoe's garret in the Horse Wynd below. It was then nearly dark, and the first impression of the discoverer was that the smoke was caused merely by a chimney a-fire, and the windows having been thrown open to relieve the rooms of smoke; but, after a few moment's steady watching, the red glow

mounted and mounted in the windows, the smoke came belching forth in dense clouds, and finally a long fork of flame flew out and went lapping upwards on the wall towards the garret above ; and then with a loud cry this one spectator was out and down the wynd shouting out the alarm.

Then ensued a scene of wild confusion. The place was densely populated, and mostly by the poorer classes, and the moment the cry of fire went forth, window after window in the immediate neighbourhood flew up, and that wild frenzy which invariably possesses such people at a fire, caused a perfect shower of chairs, tables, beds, and every kind of furniture, to come crashing down on the heads of the gathering crowd below, while screams, shouts, entreaties, and curses rose in a hoarse roar towards the dark sky above.

"Fire! Fire! A house in the Horse Wynd on fire!" was the first intimation we received of the catastrophe, from a breathless urchin ; and at that moment it happened that Nosie Mincher and myself were standing at the mouth of the pend talking of M'Indoe and his strange conduct. The moment the cry fell on our ears, Nosie started back and slowly whitened to the roots of the hair before he could get his lips to move, and then gripping the messenger hard by the hand, he gasped out—

"Where is it about? Which side?"

"The richt side ; jist under your garret," was the reply of the boy as the fire-engine was trundled out, and he seized an end of the rope. "Rin, man, rin! Ye may be in time to save something!"

In time to save something! The words were like a death-knell to Nosie.

"O God! Hughie is lost! Oh, sir! come with me for M'Indoe's sake!" and with these words hoarsely gasped out, he was off like a shot, with me tearing along at his heels, down the close, along the Cowgate, and through the surging crowd gathered in the Horse Wynd.

"Hugh M'Indoe is in the garret!" screamed Nosie, as he burst through to the front. "Hugh M'Indoe, the blacksmith ; help me to save him, some of ye ;" and he would have dashed up the stair, had not a dozen from the crowd, with myself among them, collared him and held him back.

"It's no use, Nosie," I shouted in great excitement in his ear, as he madly struggled to throw us off. "The stair to the garret is a wooden one, and by this time in a blaze ; if you try it at all, it must be from above ; you must get in from the roof."

"A ladder, then ; where can we get one?—I know ; come on, a dozen of you !" cried Nosie in a ringing shout, for the moment almost starting up to a semblance of a grown and experienced man. "A man in the garret to be saved ! come on for the ladder !" and with a rush he was up the wynd, with half the crowd in his wake—policemen, labourers, boys, and even women—right up and along North College Street to a plasterer's yard enclosed by a high wooden paling. The enclosure was six feet high if it was an inch, and as smooth as a table, yet Nosie, with a lift from me, was up and over it like a monkey. There was no asking of leave, or running for keys ; the great heavy ladder was tumbled down on the paling ; over it swung, and was grasped by a dozen hands.

Nosie came tumbling after it, and then with a ringing cry we were off again for the wynd. The distance was not above a hundred yards ; we went over it in a few seconds. A whoop and a whirl, and we were down through the parted crowd, the ladder was run up against the burning house, and in an instant Nosie, after tugging his cap down over his ears, ran up hand over hand, with a fireman's axe in his teeth and two of the brigade following hard at his heels. A plunge into the surging smoke ; a nimble run along the slates ; and Nosie's right hand swung back over his shoulder like a flash ; and then smash, smash, went the hatchet at the glass and sash of the garret window. Then, grasping the hatchet in his teeth, and seizing the under sash of the window with both hands, with one desperate tug he had pulled it outwards, hurled it clattering over the roof behind him, and leaped into the room. Across the hot floor he went, choking and gasping, scorching his hands and knees, and desperately cramming his cap into his mouth as a respirator, straight for the bed, only to find it—empty !

"Hughie ! Hughie ! O God, where can he be ?" he shouted in an agony of fear, and then the roar of flames, creeping up the wooden stair without, and the suffocating smoke filling the room, drove him gasping backwards. In the centre of the floor his head came bump against something soft ; his hand ran over the prostrate form ; his heart gave a joyful bound, and with a great cry he had raised M'Indoe's senseless form in his arms, and staggered desperately to the window. The two firemen with outstretched arms received the limp frame of the blacksmith, and one of them with a grasp at Nosie's hair caught the brave lad just as he was sinking back in the smoke ; and then, as the two were borne forward

to the edge of the roof, there rose from the throats of the human mass below a hoarse yell of delight such as I have seldom since heard.

"Hurrah! hurrah! The blacksmith is saved! Hughie M'Indoe's not dead yet; and the laddie, puir laddie, he's gey sair chokit, but he's no deid either—hurrah! hurrah!" and thus they were borne along, from roof to roof, till an open hatch was reached, and they were carried by a dozen willing hands in an extemporised stretcher of blankets, right up to the Police Office. There every attention was paid them, and there M'Indoe was slowly roused from his torpor, only to wonder much how he came to be there, instead of in the garret where he had fallen asleep. But when Nosie volubly explained the incidents I have here detailed, he first drew the lad close into his arms, with the tears creeping into his eyes; and then became for some minutes deeply absorbed in thought. That the thoughts were not pleasant we could see, for his brow gradually darkened, and then turning over in bed towards us, he raised himself on his elbow, and hotly exclaimed—

"Curses on my dull brain for not suspecting it sooner! It is all The Ruffian's work."

"In course it is," readily returned Nosie; "and the villain must have been in the room while I was out and put something in your medicine—something wot made ye sleep so sound that ye couldn't have stirred a foot though the door hadn't been fastened up outside. But he didn't think there was a winder," added the brave lad, with a chuckle of delight. "Nor he didn't think there was a Nosie Mincher that could run up a ladder and get ye out; and that can maybe run over the town and help to nab him for this night's work. Oh, no; he didn't think that!" and then poor Nosie chuckled tearfully to his heart's content.

Shortly after, Simon Penbank appeared, pallid and trembling, and was admitted to the room in which M'Indoe lay. He took off his tattered gloves with unwonted haste, and his hand, as with it he brushed the worn pile of his old hat, shook as if he had been seized with a fit of ague.

"Good God, Hughie, you have had—I may say *we* have had—a narrow escape!" he began, after giving the thin hand of his patron a dignified shake. "He has begun with a vengeance, and who can tell where it will end?"

"Then you think it is The Ruffian's work?" eagerly demanded M'Indoe.

"Think? The word is weak—inappropriate—useless. I *know* it. I saw The Ruffian to-night."

"Saw him! Where? When?"

"In Bank Street, buying a new carpet bag, at precisely the hour when your house must have been taking fire."

"Not *exactly* at the hour," feverishly put in M'Indoe. "Don't say that, Penbank, for it'll be as good as an *alibi* to him."

"I must say it unless I tell a lie," was the wonderfully conscientious reply; "but that would be nothing. If he is at the bottom of the fire he might have laid a train, with a lighted candle which would burn down and fire it hours after he left the place. Such a thing has been repeatedly detected in cases of arson. Or he might have employed a second, or third, or even fourth hand, as an agent; and you know that that has always been his favourite mode of conducting business. But, to leave these speculations, note the circumstance of the *new carpet bag*. What does it imply? What idea does it convey most swiftly to your mind? I see the answer on your lips—a journey."

"He means a bolt," interposed Nosie, with great excitement. "We'd better nab him quick, or he'll vanish."

"Better? better?" echoed Penbank, with a wildly anxious look; "we *must*! My life depends upon it; he may kill me!" and he mopped real, cold perspiration from his white temples. "He has made the place hot for himself—don't laugh, you fools! for I don't mean it for a joke—and now he will be off, bag and all, with some of the early trains. But it will only be for a while. He will slip back, unknown and unseen, and there will be another attempt at murder."

"Yes; and then the papers will put at the top of the account of yer death, 'Fortunate Occurrence!'" gravely remarked Nosie.

"Which way did he go?" inquired M'Indoe, rebuking his apprentice with a flash of the eye. "Did he know he was seen?"

"He did not," exultingly returned Penbank. "I flatter myself that no one whom I notice is cognisant of the fact. He went straight across George IV.'s Bridge, down the Meadow Walk, and appeared to be making for Lover's Loan, when he suddenly changed his mind and walked off towards the Causewayside, where I lost him."

"Exactly," significantly observed M'Indoe; "when he

changed his mind he had detected you following him, and went off in another direction to shake you off. There is nothing for it that I see but to watch the railway stations and Leith Docks, and stop every suspicious passenger. The bag may be a clue to his identity; for he will, most likely, be disguised beyond recognition. You will help the police to the utmost of your ability, Penbank? I can pay you for it yet; for I am not yet done with life, or with thief-hunting either."

"My dear friend, I will fly to do your bidding," fervently responded the seedy spy. "My heart is in the work; and if my talented friend Jamie here will but lend me one of the invaluable pistols which I have already had the honour to use, after loading the same with powder and ball before my eyes, I will even be one of the watching party at the station."

"Coward, as usual," growled M'Indoe, with a scowl.

"As usual," emphatically repeated Penbank, with a look of elation and pleasure. "Others change with time; the very sun and moon have their mutations; but Simon Penbank ever presents to the world the same serene and unruffled front; ever shrinks from real and tangible danger, and—"

"That'll do," cried Nosie, suddenly putting a dirty paw over the glib lips. "Get the barker, and let's set out at once. While you patter, The Ruffian may be escaping."

"He will probably take the most unlikely station," acutely observed M'Indoe. "He believes in doing everything boldly; so, watch the Waverley most closely, and be prepared for a great change in his appearance."

"He won't deceive me," emphatically remarked Nosie. "I'd know him through a hundred blinders!"

Shortly after these arrangements had been completed, M'Sweeny and I, who had taken up our position at the Caledonian Station in the Lothian Road, received an imperative message to come along to the Waverley at once. We leaped into the cab which had brought the man, and were carried along in a few minutes; and there we were received by Nosie and Penbank with great caution and sundry mysterious winks. A suspected man—dressed in a navy's moleskins, and carrying in one hand a new carpet bag and under the other arm a well-worn spade—had just taken his place in a third-class carriage of the train for Fife and the North. Penbank was dubious, but Nosie was confident.

"It's The Ruffian—I know it's The Ruffian," he earnestly pleaded. "It's the cap drawn down over his ears and that red

cravat which hides his chin that disguises his face. Look at his nose, too—he can screw up his face and cheeks, but he can't hide his nose."

This hurried consultation took place in one of the waiting-rooms, and then, after giving orders not to let the train start for a few minutes, we went out one by one to get a look at the suspected passenger.

M'Sweeny was completely deceived—Penbank was little better—I was doubtful; but Nosie soon solved the mystery in a fashion both rough and ready. I saw him whisper for a moment with Penbank, receive something from his breast-pocket, and then he opened the door of the adjoining compartment, whispering back—

"I'll soon let you see his face, if that's all you need."

"For goodness' sake, Nosie, be careful," I cried. "It may be the wrong man, and you may get us into trouble."

The next instant Nosie was in the carriage, and had leaped up on the seat, leant over the wooden partition at the back of the "navvy," snatched the cap with a wrench from his head, dragged the unmistakable face of The Ruffian out of the cravat, and clapped the muzzle of my pistol hard against his ear.

"Move an inch and I pull the trigger!" shouted the brave lad. "Hoorah! here Jamie, Barney, Penbank! Get the darbies on his wrists. M'Indoe's not dead, nor injured in the least, but you're nabbed!"

So paralysed was the trapped villain by the sudden and strange attack that we swarmed in unheeded at the door of his own compartment, and handcuffed him and led him out before he could utter one word in reply.

Simon Penbank divided his time between dancing, hugging Nosie with exuberant and fatherly affection, and gloatingly rubbing his hands under the eyes of the infuriated villain.

"I breathe again, oh, greatest of villains—once more I breathe freely. I wish you from the bottom of my heart a long and comfortable term!"

But never was wisher doomed to a more bitter disappointment. The Ruffian might have spared his fury, for he was perfectly safe. He was remitted and remanded time after time; but the case completely broke down from want of evidence to identify him with the "old man" who had been seen in the room below M'Indoe's garret; and at last, after a very lame attempt at a conviction on our part, the charge was found "not proven," and he was—discharged!

A POOR GIRL'S TRIALS.

I DO not remember ever being more startled at a revelation of crime or wrong-doing than I was when the following incidents were placed before me by the principal actor in the scheme. The whole details sounded like some thrilling romance, and yet the girl went over them with such natural simplicity, true pathos, and self-recrimination, that I was forced to believe that I was listening to the truth, and not an elaborate lie, got up for the purpose of a fraud. A fraud, indeed, there had been, and a most outrageous one; but when the attendant circumstances are known, it will be seen that most of the blame lay on the other side.

The green grass and trees of the Meadows were all ablaze with the June sunshine, when Mary Lawson took her way hurriedly along the side walk from her lodging in Buccleuch Street towards a newly-started factory further west, at which she earned a scanty livelihood. It was the dinner hour, and everything about the place seemed bright and happy, yet no reflection of the gladness entered the heart of poor Mary. The thought of the clanging bell, and the gate closed sharply three minutes after the ringing ceased, alone kept her weak and weary limbs moving so swiftly along the side-walk. A dark gloom filled her thoughts sleeping or waking; her face was pale and worn, and her eyes hollow with crying. She did not dare to look into the future, yet to recall the past only filled her with sorrow and shame.

"If Tom had only kept his promise to marry me, or if I could only have seen him and spoken with him before he went off to America, I could have explained everything to him, and shown him how I was as true to him as if I had been his wife," she murmured to herself. "If—if—" and then a weary sigh stopped her vain wishes, and sent her so swiftly forward that soon in utter exhaustion she sank into one of the seats placed at intervals along the walk.

"I often take this way for a quick cut," she wearily added,

looking sadly round on the bright scene; "but somehow it always sets me a-thinking and crying, and thus turns out the longest in the end. The very birds singing on the trees make me feel worse than I would be if they were all lying dead on the ground. O God! what am I to do?—where am I to hide my head four months hence?" And then the tears came so fast that she was forced to screen her face with her fingers lest curious passers-by should gape and wonder.

"My good girl, how do you do?"

The words were sweetly and musically spoken, and accompanied by the noisy rustling of a very rich black silk dress, as the speaker sat down beside her; but they made poor Mary start up from her drooping posture as scared and frightened as if a gun had been fired at her ear. She saw beside her a young lady, ruddy and fresh-looking as a new-blown rose, richly and expensively attired, and hung all over with jewellery, yet offering to the poor girl by her side a dainty little hand encased in a lavender kid glove, so tight-fitting that the little fingers could scarcely bend.

Mary Lawson rose hastily as if to leave.

"I—I am very well, ma'am," she stammered out in reply, crimsoning painfully as she spoke, "but I do not remember—that is, I do not know you."

"But I know you, and have watched you with great interest for nearly a month," graciously returned the lady with much apparent tenderness and feeling. "Pray be seated for a moment, and I will explain how."

"I would be glad to oblige you, ma'am, but it is near three o'clock, and I have a good bit to go. If I'm late I'll be shut out and fined."

"How much?"

"A shilling."

Without a word the lady opened the purse in her hand, and placed half-a-crown in the astonished girl's hand.

"There, that will keep your mind at ease. I really have something very particular to say to you, or I should not have waited for you."

"Waited for me?"

"Yes, I have watched and waited for you for three days, but have always happened to miss you. What is your name?"

"Mary Lawson."

She gave the name without hesitation, for there was something very fascinating in the face of the rich lady before

her; but think as she liked, she could not guess what was coming.

"Well, Mary, I wish to be your friend," continued her new acquaintance. "My name is Dora—Mrs Dora Blackwood—and I have been married for nearly two years. My house is in Lauriston, and I have often from the window watched you trail wearily past to your work, looking as sad and worn as if the whole sorrow of the world rested on your heart. Are you married?"

The girl crimsoned now as she thought she had never done before; and her cheeks fairly burned as the painful thought flashed upon her that her secret had been guessed at by an utter stranger. The next moment she was pale as death.

"No, ma'am," she shiveringly answered, "I am not married, but I was to have been. I was engaged, but some spiteful persons got between us, and made him believe that I was false to him, and we quarrelled, and he went off to his brother's in America."

"Leaving you to suffer the shame?"

"Yes, ma'am."

The words were breathed rather than spoken, and the girl herself scarcely knew why she had let them out. Somehow she felt that the other had already looked her through and through, and was not now likely to be deceived by reserve or denial. There was a pause for some moments, during which the bright eye of the lady was never once taken from the pale worn face at her side.

"What is your dearest wish?" the lady suddenly asked at last.

"To go to him and explain all. I know he would take me to his heart again and marry me, and make an honest woman of me."

A shade of disappointment crossed the pretty face of the lady.

"What? would you not rather have your shame first hidden?" she rather impatiently demanded.

"Ah! ma'am, that cannot be now," sadly replied the girl. "It is too late. You yourself, a perfect stranger, have guessed the secret."

"But I had a deep interest to quicken me to the discovery," eagerly persisted the lady. "It is not too late, and it can be hidden."

"But I have not a friend in the world. I am an orphan, and will be turned out the moment the truth is discovered."

"You forget what I have already said: I will be a friend to you. Now, listen. My husband is a commercial traveller, and often absent for a whole month at a time. I have a large house, with abundance of accommodation, and keep no servant but my own elder sister, who has had considerable practice and experience as a midwife. Do you now begin to understand?"

"No, ma'am, I do not," returned the bewildered girl. "It is not possible that you would be so good as to shelter me; and—"

"There! you have it now. It is not only possible, but I am willing—eager to do it. I will never have a child of my own—I *know* that, though my husband does not, and he would give the world to have a son or daughter of his own. Now, I could not shelter you in my own house for so many months, but I will take a lodging for you in an obscure part of the city. I will provide you with everything you require, and only stipulate that you shall keep yourself, till called for, in strict retirement. When the proper time comes, you can come to my house in the cab I will send for you, and you will be carefully attended by my sister and myself. My husband expects an arrival about that time, but I will contrive that he shall be away from home on one of his long rounds."

The lady ceased talking, and then was struck by a peculiar look which had settled on the white face of the girl. It seemed as if a dawning of the truth had come to her, but in her simplicity she had banished the thought as too incredible.

"Well, do you understand me now?" said the lady, in an agitated whisper.

"No, ma'am."

The words were almost false, but not quite; for her whole demeanour showed a kind of trembling apprehension and hesitation which pointed to at least an inkling of the nature of the plot. A timid look up into the pretty face beside her almost dispelled her fears; and then, with her eyes slowly filling, she seized the tiny gloved hand and kissed it passionately and impulsively.

"Oh, ma'am, I cannot think how any one should be so kind and good to me, a poor friendless girl. I must be dreaming it all."

"You are no more dreaming than I am. Do you accept my offer?"

"Accept it? I will bless you every hour of my life ever after; I will pray for your welfare night and day," impulsively

ejaculated the girl. "What could I ever do in return for such goodness?"

"I will tell you; for that is the condition upon which the whole scheme depends. When you come to my house, I will have it given out that it is I myself who am ill; and, as soon as you recover, you will leave the house *alone*. The child will remain with me, to be brought up as *my own*. For this privilege I will not only pay all expenses, but give you, when it is over, fifty pounds to yourself; a large sum even to me, but to you a little fortune. With this you could leave the country and search out your lover, or start in business, or do whatever seemed best to you."

Now, poor Mary Lawson did understand it all, down to its minutest detail, and, though not quite decided as to refusing or accepting the offer, she evidently realised its criminality, for she shook and trembled so that her companion thought that she was about to faint on the spot. The girl knew nothing of a mother's love as yet, but she had heard of it, and that made her hesitate. But, again, she had heard of the hard names, and jibes, and cruel usage, and neglect too often awarded to the love-child; here was a rare chance to save it from the dreadful fate, and her eyes brightened at the thought, while the sin of the great fraud dwindled into insignificance.

"Would—would—I be allowed to see it sometimes?" she hesitatingly faltered at last, with a heart beating so fast that she could hardly force out the words.

"Never as your own. It would be mine; and from the moment we part we would be strangers for ever. You might chance to see it on the street; but then not a sign or a look would be allowed to betray the secret. I would require your solemn oath to that effect before our arrangement is made."

"And would you deceive your husband?" stammered Mary in amazement.

"Him above all others—yes," firmly replied the lady. "He must believe that the child is his own."

The poor girl sighed, and then wept quietly for a few moments in silence.

"Would that plan not be considered a great fraud?" she simply got out at last.

"Some might think so; I don't," coolly replied the lady. "I want to have a living, breathing child, that I can hold up in the face of the sneering world, and call my own. But, if there be a fraud, I bear all the risk. You are not to know of the fraud,

and can be at the other side of the world before there is the slightest chance of detection—if such a chance could really turn up. But perhaps you would like some time to think over the proposal before deciding?” and the lady rose, and adjusted her flounces as she spoke. “I am in no hurry, and though you should refuse, perhaps another may not.”

“No, no, ma’am, I need no time to decide,” eagerly cried the girl, seizing her new friend by the dress, and looking up with tears of gratitude in her eyes. “I consent now.”

“And you will take the oath?”

“I will swear anything you like to ask, if you will only save me and my child from disgrace, as you have said.”

This ended the compact. Mary Lawson did not go back to her work; and it was soon whispered through the factory that she had suddenly given up her lodgings in Buccleuch Street to leave the city. Some even went so far as to say that she had gone off to America after her faithless lover; but in every case they were wrong, for she was snugly ensconced in an empty room at the south side which had been furnished for her by her new benefactress, Mrs Blackwood.

Four months after these singular events the Edinburgh papers one morning gave out the following announcement, which petrified and astonished not a few of the fair sex:—

“At No. — Lauriston Place, on the 15th inst., the wife of Mr Robert Blackwood of a son. Mother and child doing well.”

Mr Robert Blackwood read the announcement, not in the paper or in the city, but in a special telegram which had been sent to him away up at Bristol, and, though he was over head and ears in most important business at the time, he became frantic with delight, and not only treated a whole hotelful of people to indiscriminate tumblers of champagne, but started off next morning by the earliest express for Edinburgh.

When he arrived at Lauriston Place, and was shown into the darkened room where his wife lay, pale and agitated-looking, but not otherwise seemingly much the worse of her illness, a little bundle of pink and white was placed in his arms, which he seemed never to tire of kissing rapturously. The same salute being accorded to his wife, he was very soon expelled the room altogether, “for fear of agitating the patient.”

The house was not a small one; but it happened that next day, in wandering along the lobby, Mr Blackwood, at a time when he knew his sister-in-law to be out of the house, in pass-

ing the door of her room, heard, or thought he heard, a plaintive female voice murmur—

“ Oh, will they be guid to my bairn ? ”

Quite startled, he tried the door and found it locked. Still unsatisfied, he made his way to the sick-room of his wife and related the curious circumstance, but was only laughed at for his pains, and accused of being too free with the wine, which was actually the case, or he certainly would not have been so easily satisfied.

The sister-in-law, coming in at the same moment, joined in the merriment at his expense. Then it was declared that he had frightened his wife into a dangerous relapse by his dreadful ghost stories, and the result was that he was next day packed off to Bristol by the two artful women, with the strict injunction to finish his business, and not return for a fortnight at least.

In two-and-a-half weeks the impatient father returned, and this time his reception was gracious in the extreme. His wife had completely recovered, was getting on famously with the nursing of the child—“ bringing it up by hand,” as it is called—and not the slightest attempt was made to dissuade him from entering and examining the sister-in-law’s room, though he was still twitted about “ looking for the ghost.”

Meanwhile the ghost, poor Mary Lawson, had been packed off, when scarcely able to crawl, with fifty pounds in her pocket, and an empty void in her breast which it seemed that nothing would fill. For some days she had been troubled with what is known as “ milk fever,” and it was during one of these fits that “ the happy father ” chanced to overhear her words. She pleaded hard at the end of the fortnight to be retained as nurse to the child ; but, in spite of the wildest oaths and promises, this favour was sternly refused. As soon as she had gathered some strength, Mary left the city to start upon a strange, and what some would have thought a wild-goose chase after her faithless lover. She crossed the Atlantic, reached Brooklyn, and discovered the friends of her lover, with whom he had been residing till shortly before her arrival ; but the man himself was gone. Nothing daunted, she set out for the new place of abode, but in like manner only reached it in time to find him gone ; and in this persistent way she traced and followed him over a considerable tract of the States, till at last she found herself once more in New York, where she learned that her lover, in a very impoverished state, had once more started for Scotland. Though worn out and disappointed, the news

gave her a strange thrill of hope, and with the remains of the fifty pounds she also took passage, and after an interval of thirteen months found herself once more in Edinburgh. On the second day after her arrival she met Tom Cochrane, the lover for whom she had searched so bravely, and poor and broken though they both were, his first action was to take her by both hands, and kiss her there and then on the public street, saying—

“O Mary, I’ve had such a hunt after you! I’ve come home to marry you, and make you an honest woman.”

As soon as the “cries”—as the proclamation of banns is called—could be put in they were married, and then, for the first time, Cochrane asked for his child.

The only answer, to his surprise, was a burst of tears, and the words—

“Gone! gone!”

“Gone? dead?” he faintly exclaimed.

“For ever!” despairingly answered Mary, and with this hysterical reply he had to be content.

But he was not satisfied. After this brief conversation other questions cropped up, such as—“Who attended you? Where did you go? How did you pull through, friendless and alone? and when did the child die?” but to all these she could give no satisfactory reply. Only once, when sore pressed, she cried—

“O Tom, I wish we had fifty pounds! I could almost *steal* to have such a sum!”

In a vague way he took the outburst to mean that she had either borrowed the sum in her extremity, or been indebted to some one for it, and now wished it paid off; but all their efforts towards saving such a sum were as fruitless as if they had tried to climb to the moon. The fact is, that Cochrane did not get readily into a regular situation; and, far from getting richer, they were speedily reduced to their last penny; and this point in their deepening troubles brings me to the second part in this curious affair.

One clear frosty Sunday in February, Mr and Mrs Blackwood were walking along the Meadows, over the crisp and beaten snow, in the full grandeur of the most expensive of velvets and furs. A nursemaid walked a little behind; Mrs Blackwood walked beside her husband; and he in turn, by giving a finger to the child, supported and guided its feeble steps. They were a happy-looking party—the child crowing

triumphantly, and rosy with health and glee ; the father no less happy, and the mother smiling graciously on both ; yet a cloud loomed behind them.

A poor woman, clothed in the tawdriest and flimsiest of rags, barefooted, and having on her head only the merest shred of a bonnet, was slinking along steadily in their wake, with her hands pressed hard on her bosom, and her eyes fixed in wild intensity upon the face of the richly-dressed child. Once when she happened to come closer than usual, the father in a side glance noticed her trailing figure, and started as he observed the direction of her gaze and the wildness of her aspect.

"There is a wretched-looking woman trailing along behind us," he carelessly remarked, in a low tone to his wife. "How she stares at little Robert ; I wonder they allow such characters to prowl about. Where are the police ?"

The imperious lady at his side looked haughtily round ; but the woman had slunk in behind a tree, and appeared to be engaged in looking steadily in another direction ; so Mrs Blackwood saw, or pretended to see, nothing unusual, and merely gave the order to turn up the middle walk and make at once for home. Whether it was the sharp jar in the tone of her voice as she gave the order, or something in the expression of her face, her husband was not satisfied. What he suspected or feared it would have puzzled him to say, even to himself. But somehow he did not get rid of the idea that the strange, ragged, and solitary looking young woman was following them to the very door of their home, though at a respectful distance. Nay, even when the gas was lit, and he approached the window to let down the venetian blinds, he had a brief glimpse of a white face, rigid and awful, peering through the iron railings, at which a pair of thin, bony hands clutched with grim despair, and the eyes, he fancied, still glared fiercely in the direction of his child. True, the vision was gone in a moment—so swiftly that he had soon reasoned himself into the belief that the whole was an ocular deception ; but the uneasiness and suspicion remained. Who was this miserable woman who took such a strange interest in him and his child ? Could she be one of his wife's relatives ? one whom she was ashamed to acknowledge ? The manner of his wife, too, since their walk, struck him as strangely suspicious and watchful ; and in a hazy, indefinite way, he determined if possible to get at the secret. Next day, therefore, by some adroit management, he succeeded in getting out alone with the child, and at once made for the

Meadows. Every step of the toddling walk he kept a sharp look-out for the strange, trailing figure; and the moment he turned into the side-walk his watchfulness was rewarded by a glimpse of the poor girl, slinking along behind him as she had done the day before. He did not scare her, or appear to notice her presence in any way, until he felt her close up behind his child, when he turned upon her suddenly with the rather sharply spoken words—

“You seem to be fond of children?”

Mary Lawson started, and for a moment so shook with excitement and agitation, that though it had been to save her life she could not have got out a word in reply; then with a deep, deep sigh, and a terrible crush of her hand on her breast, she was about to slink meekly away, when her eye happened to wander to the face of the child. At the same moment, the child, perhaps tired with the walk, looked up into her face, smiled brightly, and held out its tiny arms to be lifted. This was the critical moment. With one terrible revulsion all her oaths, promises, and heart-steeling were swept away; a wild scream of delight rang from her throat, and with one great hungry swoop she had the child up in her arms, strained to her breast, and kissed so passionately that it took alarm and began to cry.

“Oh, my bairn! my bonnie, sweet wee bairn!” was all she got out, when the father, both alarmed and angry, with a quick snatch, wrenched the child from her arms. Then her senses came to her, and faintly staggering back against a tree, she covered her face with her hands, and sobbed as if her heart would break. In spite of himself the gentleman felt touched by her wild grief, and instead of reproving her, at last gently inquired—

“Are you a mother, my poor woman?”

“Yes—oh yes! I have lost just such a boy as this!” was the despairing reply.

“You seem poor?” said the gentleman, with dimmed eyes, fumbling at his purse. “Will you not be offended if I offer you that?” and he held out half-a-crown.

But the sight of the money seemed instantly to madden the poor girl to frenzy.

“No, no! there is a curse upon your money!” she screamed shrinking away with averted looks and outstretched hand. “Would to God I had never seen it! Away, away!” and before he had recovered from his astonishment she had dashed

up Wharton Lane, in the direction of Lauriston Place, and disappeared. Mr Blackwood naturally took a more roundabout way, and had also on account of the child to walk much slower, so that nearly an hour had elapsed before he reached the house ; but in the interval a strange scene had taken place. About a minute after Mary Lawson had rushed from the side of her child, she appeared breathless and white at the house in Lauriston Place. The tremendous ring at the bell brought not only the mistress herself to the door, but the nursemaid and the lady's sister as well. Two of the three started and paled at the strange apparition, but the mistress managed to stammer out—

“ Well, woman, what do you want ? ”

“ My bairn ! my bairn ! I've hungered for it night and day since I left,” screamed the distracted girl. “ I canna live without it. Oh, say you will forgive me and give me it back, and I'll get the fifty pounds back for you, though I should have to work the last breath out of my body for it ! ”

The guilty women stared at each other, and one of them—the mistress—tried to close the door in the girl's face.

“ You must be mad, my good woman,” she hurriedly returned, with lips white with fear. “ There is no child of yours here ; but if you are in want,”—and she hastily pulled out a bank-note, and tried to slip it into the hand which clung so wildly to the lintel to prevent the shutting of the door,—“ take that.”

“ No, no ! I want no more money ; only say you will give me my bairn ; ” and seeing that they were determined to eject her by force, she clung to the door-chain and lintel till her bare arm was almost bruised to a jelly. Then she fought madly and desperately, till a crowd collected, and a policeman appeared, when she was torn off by main force, and dragged in a half-fainting condition away up to the Police Office. There she had no sooner calmed down than she demanded to see a detective, to make an important confession. I was sent in to hear her story, and as I said in beginning, I never was more startled in my life. At first I thought the poor girl was mad ; but when her husband, Tom Cochrane, called at the Office and was made acquainted with the details, he emphatically announced his belief in its entire truthfulness. The result was that, after being brought up at the Police Court and fined for creating a disturbance, Mary Lawson and her husband, accompanied by myself, made our way to the house in

Lauriston Place, and utterly horrified and prostrated Mr Blackwood by a demand to give up his child, or furnish clear and unmistakable evidence of its parentage.

Never shall I forget the look of pallid despair and hopeless grief which settled on his face as the story of the girl was minutely gone over. All the noisy protestations of innocence uttered by his wife and her sister fell upon his ear unheeded; and when Mary had finished he simply asked—

“And now, have you given the matter into the hands of the police? Do you wish my wife arrested?”

“Oh, no! for she has been guid to my bairn,” was Mary Lawson’s impulsive reply.

“Ah! those words and that tone of voice! I’ve heard them before,” he suddenly ejaculated. “Will you come and show me the room in which you were kept while you were here?”

Mary rose at once, walked out to the lobby, and without hesitation laid her hand on the door of his sister-in-law’s room. Mr Blackwood groaned, returned to the front parlour, and after a few angry whispered questions at his wife, to which he received sullen replies, he turned to the nursemaid with forced calmness and told her to bring the child.

It was placed in Mary’s arms, and then the resemblance between the pinched face of the poor girl and that of the richly-dressed child was apparent to all.

“Take it; it is yours,” simply ejaculated the unhappy man. “I think my heart is broken.”

Trembling with eagerness, and almost afraid to believe her good fortune, Mary deftly stripped off the fine clothes from the child till it was naked as when it was born, and then replacing them with some poorer clothing which she had brought with her, she hastily made for the door with her treasure.

“As for this woman,” said the deceived husband, turning and indicating his cowering wife with a cold wave of the hand, “I am done with her. We separate for ever from this moment.”

The guilty woman burst into tears, and we precipitately left the room. Mr Blackwood himself showed us out; and when it at last came to Mary’s turn to shake hands he turned to her with a choking gasp, and slipped something into her hand.

“Take that,” he hoarsely whispered; “use it for him, and—and let me kiss him once before we part, for, oh! I could not help learning to love him.”

Mary is now a matronly-looking woman, with a happy home and a large family. Only once, when her eldest son asked her how he came to be called "Robert Blackwood Cochrane," did she tell how she got a certain twenty-pound note lying to his credit in the Savings Bank, by relating to him the story of "a poor girl's trials."

A RAILWAY LEAP.

ALTHOUGH The Ruffian had escaped actual punishment after the Horse Wynd fire, the star of his prosperity from that moment appeared to wane. One case after another cropped up, distinctly traceable to him, till, hunted from hiding-place to hiding-place, afraid to venture into the city for fear of betrayal by former associates, and equally afraid to travel to another city and risk capture on the way, the villain began to fairly realise the terrors of crime, and mostly spent his nights and days about the "Whinny Hill" in the Queen's Park, never certain of a meal or a day's liberty.

One bitter cold morning, about dawn, he was slowly crawling through the little village of Duddingston—gaunt, grizzled, and starved, clad in miserable rags, and worn down with incessant watching and pent-up hate. During the night he had been away on a vain expedition along the Duddingston Road, nearly as far as Portobello, to see what he could pick up; and now, having tried to appease his hunger with a frosted turnip, stolen from a sheep-field, he was slowly dragging himself back towards his lair on the "Whinny Hill," up beside Dunsappie Loch. He was fainting with hunger and continued exposure; yet he was afraid to speak to even the low characters who haunted the hill. The extreme cold and drizzling fogs alone had saved him from capture or betrayal; causing as they did the bleak hillside to be completely deserted both by night and day.

But now, as he dragged himself faintly in the direction of his hiding-place, he felt a strange exhaustion creeping over his faculties, dimming and clouding his ideas of his surroundings, and making him curse by turns himself and all living humanity. Duddingston is a pretty place, full of trees, fruit gardens, and flowers, and every house of any pretensions has a railed plot in front of it. The Ruffian was slowly moving along towards the Park gate clinging to these, when suddenly, in front of one, which I shall call Rose Cottage, his strength gave way, and he

found himself sinking on his knees on the side path, still grasping the iron gate which had saved him from falling.

The morning was grey and dull, but one inmate at least of the cottage before which he had sunk was stirring, and, moreover, watching with peculiar interest his slow movements. This was Mr M'Gregor, son of the widow who owned the cottage, a gentleman under thirty, and both a cripple and an invalid. Mr M'Gregor was one of those impulsive and warm-hearted mortals, so rare in the world, who take a deep and practical interest in the despised and suffering as they come under their notice; but, much as he knew of Edinburgh with its sins and sorrows, like thousands more he had never heard of The Ruffian, or even he might have hesitated before offering him succour and assistance. He had been watching from his easy-chair the dull grey of the morning brighten into a semblance of day, when the shadow of the hunted man crossed the front of the house, and instantly moved him to compassion. Scarcely had The Ruffian dropped on his knees when the window of the cottage was thrown up, and Mr M'Gregor shouted out—

“Hullo, there! Anything the matter?”

The Ruffian was too far gone to reply; but, knowing that he was being addressed by a man, and feeling instinctively that his safety lay in avoiding such, he began to try to crawl from the spot, but only rolled helplessly on the ground the moment he relinquished his hold of the gate.

Mr M'Gregor was in a fidget of impatience. He was expressly forbidden to leave the house during the earlier hours of the day, more especially in cold or fog; yet here was a man fainting, perhaps dying, and no one but himself stirring and ready to assist him.

“Don't give way,” he desperately shouted. “Can't you pull yourself together so as to open the gate and come in? I am lame, and the morning is so damp that I cannot very well venture out so far.”

To this there was no reply. The miserable object now lay perfectly still in front of the gate, and, reckless with sympathy, the warm-hearted gentleman seized his crutches and hobbled outside, where, with great difficulty, he managed to raise the senseless form, and half drag, half support it into the house. Then he rang for the servant, assisted The Ruffian upstairs into his own warm bed, procured him a scalding tumbler of wine-negus, followed by as much food, gradually administered,

as the famished man chose to devour, and then quietly inquired into the cause of his trouble and misery.

The answer was not the most satisfactory. Never of a communicative or social turn, The Ruffian was less than ever disposed to talking, especially regarding his past life and future prospects. The gentleman could understand that he was an unfortunate man, having a host of enemies, and innocently accused of being—a thief! This information was followed by an imploring request to be allowed to remain in hiding in the cottage till night, and an eager demand for a promise not to let his presence be known to a soul outside of the cottage; to which, after making the required promise, Mr M'Gregor gave the following warm and characteristic answer—

“It is nothing to me what you have been in the past, whether a thief or no. I found you sinking with hunger and exposure at my gate, and will do my best to send you away with a better chance for life. You shall get whatever food you require during the day; I will try to hunt out some warmer clothing for you from my own wardrobe; and at night, with a trifle in your pocket, you shall depart unmolested to try your fortune once more.”

This generous speech elicited a whine of thanks from The Ruffian; but there was something so peculiar about the furtive glance he bestowed upon the jewellery hanging about Mr M'Gregor's person, that the gentleman not only noticed it but recalled the circumstance when too late. A suspicion of treachery, however—especially from the man he was thus sheltering and befriending—never once crossed his brain; and as the forenoon wore away The Ruffian was left alone in the bedroom to amuse himself in what way he thought best. The moment he was left alone his thoughts turned to the readiest means of benefiting himself by what he looked upon as the simplicity of his host. He made a rapid inventory of the most portable and valuable articles in the room itself, and then by a speculative survey of the upper flat, tried to form a correct idea of the position of the various rooms below. Scarcely had he completed this rapid inspection of his surroundings and returned to the bedroom, when a tap-tapping in the garden below fronting the house attracted his attention, and, peering down through the half-blind of flowered muslin, he saw that the sound proceeded from a blacksmith and his apprentice, hard at work at the railing and gate; while Mr M'Gregor himself, with a plaid thrown round him, was sitting near by, convers-

ing cheerily and freely with the man he was employing. All this was simple and natural, and not at all calculated to alarm even a hunted man like The Ruffian—a blacksmith mending a gate lock, while his apprentice whistlingly lined the railings with wire-fencing—but a strangely-familiar tone in the voice of the blacksmith riveted the villain above to the spot, with eyes almost starting from their sockets; and then, as the man looked up for a moment from his work, he recognised—Hugh M'Indoe!

“Curses on it! what brings him here?—am I betrayed?” he gasped, shrinking back from the blind with clenched hands. “If I thought it, I would strangle that white-faced cripple with my own hands before he could cry ‘Help!’ M’Indoe and Nosie Mincher, can they be after me?”

His first thought was a dash out by the back of the house for liberty; but the calm tones of the blacksmith, his unsuspecting demeanour, as well as the careless singing of Nosie, speedily assured him that his presence was not suspected. The bedroom window was fastened down, and the gate at which M'Indoe worked some distance forward; but part of the conversation did reach his ears in a disjointed state, and one reply of M'Indoe, in particular, as it bore on the project even then formed in his own mind, made him set his teeth hard, as if already preparing for the struggle.

"Do not speak of the cost or the little distance we have had to come," warmly answered M'Indoe, looking up into Mr M'Gregor's face, with an emotion he was generally slow to exhibit. "You have so long been a friend to me, and have carried your influence so far among your acquaintances in my favour, that I now carry fuel enough in my heart to warm me for a hundred times the distance. You do not know whom you have been assisting; but some day you shall hear my story, and some day, I hope, I may repay all."

"I do not care what you have been, I know only what you are—a hard-working, deserving man," was the smiling reply. "I have done no more for you than I would do for any one."

He was about to add the story of the exhausted tramp whom he had that morning succoured and sheltered; but fearing to wound M'Indoe's sensibility by the comparison—knowing well by report that he, too, had been a thief, and remembering also his promise of secrecy to The Ruffian—he ~~was~~ ^{remained} silent. It is a pity that he did; and no one was to suffer more severely from the reticence than himself. It must have

been a strange picture : The Ruffian glaring down through the flimsy muslin upon the man for whose life he now absolutely thirsted ; and that man, also thirsting for his capture and ruin, looking up unconscious of his presence, and talking with gratitude and emotion of past kindnesses to the man whom he had already marked for an easy victim. A mere step, as it were, lay between the bitter foes, and yet they were as safe from each other as if they had been at opposite sides of the globe. The position is a curious one, and one of which something could be made by a story writer.

In about three hours the work at railings and lock was finished ; and then, after partaking of some bread and cheese and a glass of beer which was brought out to them, M'Indoe and Nosie wrapped up their tools in their aprons, gave each a grimy paw to Mr M'Gregor to shake, and then, to the intense relief of the watcher above, they took leave. Shortly after, a dinner was sent up to The Ruffian, and this meal, a few hours later, was followed by tea ; and after this meal Mr M'Gregor reappeared, carrying almost a complete suit of clothes, which he made over to the needy wretch, who told him in return that, if he would allow him to remain in the house till daybreak, he would be his eternal debtor. This fatal concession also was granted, and with a hearty shake of the hand, Mr M'Gregor retired to his study, not expecting to see his interesting guest again. That he did not actually retire to rest was a mere chance occurrence ; for, as I have shown, he had not the slightest suspicion of impending evil or treachery of any kind.

Meanwhile The Ruffian in the bedroom upstairs had attired himself, not in the old clothes provided by Mr M'Gregor, but in a much finer and newer suit taken from an adjoining room. Every burglar moves about a house as softly and noiselessly as a cat, and this must have been particularly the case with The Ruffian, for, among other rooms in the upper flat, he had entered the bedroom of the widow lady, Mrs M'Gregor, and without rousing or disturbing her in the slightest, had removed a valuable gold watch, a silver card-case, and a pair of gold spectacles, as well as a leather hand-bag, in which all the plunder was finally deposited for carrying off. His next visit was to the room below, and here he exercised redoubled caution. The only article of value to him in the room was a desk, and, after trying it in every way with a large clasp knife which he had found in Mr M'Gregor's pocket, he was forced at last to give it up in despair. Yet he could not bring himself to

leave it, and, on trying to take it bodily under his arm, he found it too bulky to carry away with safety. As a last resource, therefore, he turned to the fire-place, lifted one of the fire-irons—a heavy square-edged poker—and, after cutting a hole large enough with the knife, had inserted the point of the extemporised lever to prize it open, when the sudden opening of a door on the same flat made him start and hold his breath. No sound of footsteps followed the opening of the study door; but there was a dead pause, long enough and still enough to almost make his heart burst.

“Anybody there?”

He heard the two words softly uttered, recognised the voice as that of his benefactor, and shrank down behind the great easy-chair—desk, poker, and all—no longer frightened, but desperate and resolved. A still longer pause followed the unanswered question, and then his heart went faster as he heard a slight clatter, as of crutches being grasped and adjusted, and then, with deadly distinctness, he heard the thump, thumping gradually approach the room in which he now grovelled. First there came a blink of light through the keyhole, then a hand touched the lock and softly opened the door, and then he saw Mr M'Gregor, in the full blaze of the taper he carried, enter the room, peering anxiously on every side. Keenly the hidden robber watched the direction of his glance as it lighted on the spot which had lately been occupied by the desk; and then, before the cry of dismay and alarm had fairly risen to the gentleman's lips, he was out with a bound, snatching up the bag of plunder, and endeavouring to rush past the lame gentleman and escape.

In that one moment, however, the other had seen and understood all, and uttering a thrilling cry for help, he dropped crutches and taper, and with a swoop of his arms had encircled The Ruffian's neck and covered him, toppling over on to the carpet. But the powerful thief was not overcome; he was only momentarily taken aback, and in strength the two were no more to be compared than a blade of grass and a gnarled elm. Dropping the desk and leather bag, and swinging the poker high overhead, The Ruffian throttled the white face and neck hard against the carpet till the eyes began to protrude, and then hoarsely whispered—

“Let go, or I'll kill you!”

There was no answer, but a tighter grasping of the weak arms, and a vain, gurgling attempt at a scream; and then, with

a whizz, the heavy weapon descended on the forehead of the unfortunate gentleman, felling him like a stone, and sending a spurt of warm blood right up into The Ruffian's eyes. The sound of some one stirring above made The Ruffian's next movements the work of but a second or two. Seizing the clammy hand of the gentleman, he tore off the two valuable rings, ruthlessly enough to take part of the skin with them; the watch, chain, and breastpin followed, and were tumbled into the leather bag beside the other spoil; and then, with his usual readiness to take advantage of every trifle, he turned out a little bunch of keys from the vest pocket of the senseless victim, fitted one to the lock of the desk, and tumbled out its contents on the carpet.

A parcel of bank notes rewarded the hasty grope with their unmistakable crackle, and, tossing these into the bag and snapping the clasp, he glided like a shadow for the door. But now there was a light rush from above; he saw the flitting white form on the dim staircase, and knew who had been roused when he heard the alarmed cry—

"Harcourt! Harcourt! there are thieves in the house!"

But The Ruffian was now desperate, and such desperation in the common cracksman means an utter disregard for human life. Talk of a poacher pursued by gamekeepers—his ferocity and reckless violence are nothing to that of the housebreaker, who in such a strait would hew down twenty, though each blow were a murder, to save his own skin and preserve his freedom. With one swift dash, The Ruffian was across the lobby, past the screaming white figure, which was now joined by that of the servant, and out at the front door. Outside M'Indor's lock held the gate fast; but this gave The Ruffian no great concern. With a swift scramble he was up and over the spiky railings, dropped on the other side, and disappeared in the darkness, just as the two scared women appeared in the open doorway, rending the air with their screams for help. Cutting away down the road towards Portobello in the teeth of the wind, The Ruffian's first thought was how best to put a safe distance between him and the scene of the robbery.

"I must travel on some six or eight miles along the coast—as far I can walk before six o'clock—and then take train for the south at some little station, free of spots," was his muttered reflection; but when he came to the cross road at Jock's Lodge he paused, feverishly biting his nails and still undecided.

"No," he thought, more decidedly. "The small stations, with their few passengers, and their prying policemen, and stai-

ing station-master, are always most dangerous ; and, besides, I must get rid of the swag at any risk, notes and all. I shall try old Pete, in Leith Wynd, for a disguise. I can pay for it, and he is not the man to refuse to benefit himself. Then I can try a bold move—generally safest—to mix with the crowd at the Lothian Road Station, and disappear right under M'Govan's nose."

With these quick resolves he cut across towards Jock's Lodge, passed the little Police Station with a chuckle at them slumbering while he worked, and very speedily got up to Edinburgh from the other side, taking the darkest and most unfrequented ways, and thus, by Abbey Hill and North Back Canongate, arrived at old Pete's in Leith Wynd. This broker of easy principles was accessible at all hours ; but the moment his blinking eyes rested on the panting Ruffian, his cheerful and stereotyped smile faded into a look both cold and repellent.

"I want a disguise, as quick as you like," panted out The Ruffian, producing a roll of notes which at any other time would have made the eyes of the old man twinkle like twin stars. "I can pay well for it, too ; so look sharp."

"I haven't got any ; and if I had, you shouldn't have it," said the fence doggedly. "Every one's sworn agin ye."

"Give me the disguise," hotly breathed The Ruffian, "and fence all this at your own price ;" and he turned out the glittering contents of the bag.

"I dursn't—indeed I dursn't," cried the old man, trembling before the other's flaming and blood-shot eyes. "They're all sworn agin ye, and they'll kill me if I did it."

"I can ruin you."

"So can they."

"Look here !" and The Ruffian slowly and deliberately produced and unclasped the long-bladed knife which he had taken from Rose Cottage. "Give me an old man's wig, a good hat with a broad brim, and an overcoat in exchange for this, or I swear that I'll cut your throat on the spot. I believe I've killed a man to-night already, and I can be hanged only once."

The terrible threat, the gleaming knife and eyes, and the spots of blood yet visible on The Ruffian's face, completely cowed the old fence. Very reluctantly he produced the necessary articles, taking in payment one of the stolen rings—merely, as a blind, however, as will soon be seen ; and then finding him resolute in his refusal to fence the stolen property, The Ruffian at last packed up his leather bag and took himself

off, transformed into his favourite character, the stooping and plethoric old man.

Meantime some singularly swift and expeditious movements were being executed on the road leading round to Edinburgh by the other way—that is, by the Windy Gowl. It is said that when a policeman is wanted, he is never at hand; but while the robbery and assault had been taking place in Rose Cottage, it happened that a merry-making was going on in a house not thirty yards from the spot, and at this merry-making, as guests, there were two of the force—a private and a sergeant. The moment the alarm was raised these two were on the spot; made what inquiries they could, and instantly started off by different ways in pursuit; one taking the Portobello Road, and the other the Windy Gowl. Of course there was little chance of a capture after such an interval of confusion; but one advantage was to be gained—instant intelligence of the crime by telegraph to every station in the county, and along the different railway lines, together with a description of the criminal, and the dress he was likely to wear. Not a soul appeared in sight till the sergeant was well past the “Echoing Stane,” and about to mount the hill towards St Leonard’s, when he caught sight of a tall and slender figure advancing up the Queen’s Drive, evidently intending to keep on it towards Dunsappie Loch, and beguiling the way by carolling in a cheerful, but very disagreeable tone of voice. Professional instinct more than anything caused the sergeant to shout out a stern command to halt, which was instantly obeyed; and then as he got closer to the shabby figure, he recognised with some disappointment the blotched face of Simon Penbank.

“Where have you been? and what are you after?” roughly demanded the sergeant, seizing the spy by the coat collar, and holding him fast.

“Gently, gently, my friend,” coolly returned Penbank, tenderly disengaging the rough fingers from his frail coat. “My frail but faithful old coat is easily torn, but to mend it is a difficult process. I have just come from my palace—the condemned land, Blackfriars Wynd—where I left the genial repose of my bed of feathers—long feathers with heads on them, and no sheets—to proceed on an exploring expedition—a hunt, if I may so name it—on the ‘Whinny Hill,’ after a criminal who has caused me more trouble and uneasiness than the combined police and thieves of Edinburgh. A little bird—a denizen of the Park—whispered to me in the Canongate, while buying

her day's provisions, that if I searched the 'Whinny Hill' last night I would find him asleep. Report is a liar, for I searched the whole hill-side, back and forward. He was not there. To-night I could not sleep, so I again, at the risk of my valuable life, resolved to look for him, and here you behold me."

"Ah, I'm afraid I'll have to take you with me," was the rejoinder. "A robbery has been committed round at Duddingston, and a gentleman half killed by a Jew who got smuggled into the house."

"A Jew?" shouted Penbank, every trace of his usual inflated style of speech vanishing in the great shock of excitement. "Good heavens! was he young or old?"

"Young and powerful, but in a half-starved state. I rather think he is a man already wanted for an attempted burglary last week along with the man who died in the Infirmary."

"The Ruffian!" hoarsely exclaimed Penbank. "It's The Ruffian, and you stand there chattering while he may be escaping. Run, man, run! see how I can spin over the ground!" and he began to course over the ground with remarkable agility towards the station at St Leonard's, dragging the sergeant by the button-hole along with him. "He *has* shown his teeth again, then? Tell me all about it, and who is hurt? M'Govan must be roused, and M'Indoe, and Nosie, and M'Sweeny—the whole staff and force, indeed. Come on!—quicker, quicker! I have an interest in his capture, not only to the extent of two probable sovereigns, but to save my own life. He would think nothing of killing me; has attempted it already."

Half-an-hour later, Penbank was thundering at the door of M'Indoe's new home in the Horse Wynd, and the moment the door was opened by the half-sleeping Nosie, he burst in upon the blacksmith, choking with excitement and want of breath.

"The Ruffian! The Ruffian!" was all he could gasp, and then M'Indoe was out of bed with a spring, and handed him a glass of water, which he pushed away with a shudder.

"The Ruffian has done it again," he pursued, after a moment's hard breathing—"robbed a house at Duddingston—Rose Cottage, they call it—and half-murdered the gentleman. a Mr M'Gregor, who had taken him in, dying with hunger."

"What?"

The word came out so sharp and strange that Penbank looked up in astonishment, which was not diminished when he saw M'Indoe slowly whiten to the lips, and sink overpowered into a seat.

"Did you say Mr M'Gregor, Rose Cottage?" slowly and painfully enunciated M'Indoe.

"The same; and he's gone with enough plunder and notes to start a bank."

"But he will not escape," said M'Indoe, with a calmness which looked positively frightful after his terrible agitation. "Get on your things, Nosie—quick! We've some work before us. It may take us days or weeks, but it must be done!"

A few minutes later I was roused out of bed by the strangely excited trio; and, after hearing their story while dressing, I hurried along with them to the Central Office, to consult and decide as to the best means wherewith to enmesh the fugitive. The telegraph was already going fast and steady, sending the news miles in every direction; but, before we had decided what was best to try immediately, we were astonished to receive a visit from old Pete, the Leith Wynd fence! Producing the ring which he had received from The Ruffian, he detailed every word of their conversation, ending with a minute description of every article of his apparel, and urging us instantly to guard the railway stations, as the early passenger and mail trains would soon begin to ply. Of course, as a reward for his information, we could only detain and lock him up; but the hint was not thrown away. M'Sweeny and Penbank, with abundance of auxiliaries, were deployed down to the Waverley Station. Nosie and some others were sent down to watch the docks at Leith, while M'Indoe and I went in a cab, driven like fury over the empty streets, to the station at the Lothian Road. The last bell for the earliest mail train for Carlisle was just being rung as we jumped out of the cab, and breathlessly inquired of the ticket-clerk for an old man wearing a slouched hat and heavy dark topcoat, and carrying a leather hand-bag.

"He's in the train; he has just taken a ticket, second class—hooked nose, like a Jew, with dark eyes. Run, or you'll be too late!"

We flew in, but had time only to search one carriage—second class—when the whistle sounded and the train began to move. Seeing that this was the only carriage of that class in the whole train, we could not but think it strange that in it our quarry was not to be seen. The fact is, I believe, that he had seen us dash along the platform towards the train, and had instantly clambered through the window and cowered down on the foot-board outside, hoping, perhaps, that we would let the train depart in peace.

"Jump in—quick ! or stand off the train !" cried the guard, running with us beside the moving train.

"He's not there ; what's to be done ?" I cried, appealing to M'Indoe.

"He is in the train. In with you ! we can hunt for him on the way," was the stern rejoinder, and with a jump he was in, and I after him. Bang went the door, the guard caught his own carriage, and then we were off through the darkness, with the glowing lights of the long station fading behind, and the pitchy blackness in front relieved only by the glare of the engine fire and the stream of sparks flying from its chimney.

As a matter of course, our first business was to search the carriage thoroughly from end to end ; and then, finding nothing, we read the next move in each other's eyes.

"We must get into the next carriage," said M'Indoe promptly. "The second-class ticket has been only a blind."

Unfastening one of the doors with my own railway key, I got out into the cold current of air flying past outside, and, clinging fast to the iron stanchions, I was creeping along the foot-board towards a third-class carriage further back, followed by M'Indoe, when an angry and imperative voice above the guard's van caught my ear, and, peering forward and upwards, I beheld a strange scene. The Ruffian, disguised as an old man, had clambered up by the iron steps at the end of the van on to the roof, and now, with the unclasped knife in his hand, was peering over the ledge into the horrified face of the guard, who was leaning out of the window, and as helpless with fear as if he had been gazing up at a maniac.

"Put on the breaks, curse you, or I'll come down and cut your throat !" shouted The Ruffian. "You must slacken speed till I can jump off. Do it ! I am a desperate man, and will kill you without compunction."

While he hoarsely roared out the words, so as to be audible above the tearing noise of the train, M'Indoe and myself were gliding swiftly along and in between the carriages. A quick run up the iron steps—the danger of which we never thought of in the excitement of the moment—landed us on the roof of the van.

The Ruffian, lying flat on his belly, and evidently quite unconscious of our presence, still leaned over the edge, breathing out the most diabolical threats against the frightened guard. In a moment my eye had lighted on the leather bag, firmly grasped in his left hand, which also clenched firmly the low iron rail run-

ning round the roof of the van, and without a pause I plumped down on my knees and wrenched it from him.

A deep growl of rage and fury brought him up on his feet and facing us ; and then, recognising M'Indoe, he threw out one sledge-hammer of a fist in his face, felling him flat on the roof of the van, and then, with a roar of defiance like that of a hunted tiger, he rushed forward the whole length of the van roof, to give himself an impetus in the same direction as the train, and with one terrific bound was through the air and on to the whin-covered bank. I thought he was killed—but no. Looking back as we were whirled onward, I saw him rise, shake a fist, and scream out—

“M'Indoe ! I shall kill you—kill ! kill !” and then the sounds died away, and he faded to a mere speck, limping away in the distance.

I had got the plunder, however ; and M'Indoe, barring a good shaking, was not greatly the worse of the blow ; and though the fugitive had escaped, I had a good guess that, if his threat against M'Indoe were to be fulfilled, his blind desire for revenge would keep him about Edinburgh, and that I would thus speedily hear of him again.

A STREET-WAIF'S HONESTY.

It is curious to note how often a detective gets credit for great activity and skill in cases where the clues drift right into his hand, and in which he has comparatively little trouble or search. Judging from my own experience, indeed, I should say that such cases are the rule, and that the exceptions are those in which the hardest work receives the fittest round of praise. More : honour does not always descend where honour is due. I got abundance of praise for the following case, but I mean here to let the praise descend on the proper shoulders. However, though the treatment is a little tantalising at times, there is nothing in it to kick at ; it is common in nearly every walk in life ; and we often see a very indifferent lecturer or player receive a terrific round of applause, and coolly take it to himself, when in reality it belongs entirely to the author whose sentiments he has uttered.

Davie M'Queen, aged fourteen, a street waif, having no fixed place of abode, but not therefore a vagabond, stood at the mouth of an entry in the Saltmarket, in Glasgow, one morning in July, uncertain in what direction to turn for the day. He was not hungry, for he had just finished his last hunk of bread, with some cold potatoes to eke it out ; nor was he particularly cold, for, though his clothes were thin and spare, the weather was warm, and thus the two just suited each other. But he was poor ; indeed, he was poorer than usual ; for though The Fair was going on, and brought many strangers and much money to the city, it also brought many needy and hungry waifs like himself, ready to snap up the stray crumbs. In strict truth, Davie had not a penny—not a coin in his possession. He was even a halfpenny in debt, having found himself that much short of his night's lodging money the day before. But he had a sturdy hopefulness, and sense of honour and honesty about him for all that.

"I'll get on some way," he said to himself, stoutly and cheeringly. "Auld Starkey, the fish-man, aye said, 'Stick you

to bein' honest, no matter what turns up to tempt ye, and you'll find it's the sure way to get on in the long-run ;' and I've never starved yet, though he's deid, an' no a sowl left to help me when I'm hard up."

He looked along the deserted street both ways, still undecided, and finally allowed his eye to wander to the bright strip of soft summer sky overhead. A flock of sparrows fluttering noisily between him and the snowy cloud-masses particularly caught his attention.

"They're aye happy an' whistlin'," he said, a little in self-reproach, "and what for should I be different? I'll get on by and bye. If I could only save enough to get some dacent claes, I might get on to be a porter, or to drive a van, or something."

"Hullo! you, boy, what are you doing there looking up at the stars and talking to yourself?"

The words came in upon him suddenly, and brought his eyes back to earth. The speaker was a rather flashily dressed gentleman, with curly black hair, and shiny, fashionable hat. His face was slim, and deeply pock-marked; and below this was a gaudy scarf, with brass pin of the horse-shoe pattern.

That much Davie made out at a single glance. He did not know that he was being addressed by Tom Cloggers, a London thief of great dexterity. He knew some of the Glasgow thieves by sight, and generally contrived to give them as wide a berth as possible; but Cloggers was a fresh arrival, and rather better got up than the local hands.

"Will you carry a parcel for me?" said the thief, sharply and promptly, before Davie could carry his examination further.

"Yes, sir. Where to?" eagerly replied the boy, touching his cap instantly, and looking about for the parcel.

"To the railway station at the end of Queen Street," cautiously and guardedly answered the thief, looking him keenly all over. "I'll give you sixpence for the job, and you must do exactly as I bid, or you'll get nothing."

"Oh, yes, sir; I'm ready now, sir," quickly returned Davie. "Where's the parcel, sir?"

"I have it here in my pocket," said Cloggers, sinking his voice to a low pitch, and stepping further into the entry, while he fumbled in the back pocket of his frock-coat and brought out a brown paper parcel of about four inches square. "This is it."

"It's gey wee," said Davie.

"Yes, but it's valuable; lose that and you may lose your head into the bargain, for it's as good as a fortune."

"A' richt; I'll tak' care o't."

"You're not a thief, are you?" suspiciously inquired the thief, still fingering reluctantly the parcel. "You wouldn't bolt with it?"

"No; I never was a thief, nor never will be," stoutly answered Davie, with a clear look up in the other's face, far more convincing than his words.

"That's right," patronisingly returned the thief, seeing that he was to benefit by it. "Honesty's the best of policy; never say die, and all that sort of thing. These are the sentiments wot gets a cove on in the world. Now, hear wot you've to do. You'll put this parcel for safety in your breast-pocket, and walk straight from here to the station, never looking round or taking the slightest notice of me. I'll be behind you some distance all the way to see that you don't mistake the road, or run too fast. When you get to the station keep a sharp eye on me, and notice what carriage I go into, only never seem to look at it. Don't come near the train till it is moving off, when I will hold up my finger so, and then you'll run forward and slip the parcel in at the window, so that no one will see what you're giving me. Do you understand?"

"Fine; I'll no forget onything ye've telt me," said Davie, who, though he thought the proceedings rather odd, was only too glad to earn an honest sixpence. "Will I start noo?"

"Yes;" and the parcel was now slowly surrendered, and concealed in Davie's breast. "But stop; if any of the beaks are about—you know what beaks are, don't you?"

"It's the bobbies ye mean, isn't it, sir?"

"Exactly; if any of them are about, don't be shuffling guiltily about as if you were a prig, or about some palming lay. I wouldn't like you to get into trouble."

"Oh, there's no fear," quietly replied the boy; "the pegs knows me, and never says a word."

"Ah, I'm glad of that;" and the thief brightened, and spoke with such emphasis as to actually look as if he meant what he said. "Now, then, off with you!"

Davie started with a light heart, little dreaming of the length of the journey his feet were to go over. The streets were almost empty, it being scarcely seven o'clock, and all the six o'clock people—working extra time for the coming holidays—gone more than an hour before. Straight up the Trongate he

went, towards Queen Street and the station, which he reached just as the train for Edinburgh was being shunted in. Davie went right in, waited till the train stopped, took up his position near a third-class carriage, and then, to use his own words, "gied a squint roond for his queer employer." Cloggers was just turning in to the rail before the booking-office—had, in fact, ordered a ticket for Edinburgh, and was fumbling for the money wherewith to pay for it, when, to the astonishment of Davie, he suddenly turned about, slipped away towards the entrance, and took to his heels. Glancing quickly round, Davie could see nothing alarming in the direction his employer's eyes had taken—only a noted Glasgow detective sauntering leisurely out of one of the waiting-rooms, whistling softly and carelessly to himself, and never once looking towards the booking-office which the flying man had just vacated. What could the sudden flight mean? Davie had no time to answer the question; for the instant after he remembered the parcel entrusted so cautiously and suspiciously to his keeping, and he instantly darted towards the entrance, through the booking-office, and up Dundas Street, after the flying figure, madly shouting out—

"Hi! hi! the parcel! ye're forgettin' yer parcel!"

But the shout, given out as only a Glasgow ragamuffin can give one out, far from causing the flashy gentleman to pause or turn, seemed only to add fresh speed to his swift limbs. He flew on, never once looking back, till Buchanan Street Station hove in sight, and then Davie thought he had got a glimmering of the cause of his sudden flight.

"Maybe he fund that he was in the wrang station; yes, that must be it," he muttered to himself, striving hard to make up to the vanishing figure. "Peg on, Davie! peg on! dinna let him think ye're a thief and wantin' to bolt wi' his parcel. I said I wadna rin awa' wi't, so here's for a burster."

Davie didn't run badly for a boy, but still the man had the advantage both in good legs and a long start; and when the boy panted into the great station, it was only to see Cloggers' coat and boots vanish into a moving train, the door slammed to, and the train whirled off before his eyes. Davie put on a determined spurt at the last moment, and might really have made up to the carriage to throw in the parcel, but at that critical juncture one of the railway starters, thinking he was meaning to get into the moving train, pounced upon him, and dragged him back.

"What do you want to do?" he shouted into the ear of the struggling boy.

"Let go—jist for a meenit," he pleaded. "Bother take you, ye've made me owre late;" and taking off his cap, he mopped the dripping sweat from his brow, and looked up in the starter's face with undisguised annoyance.

"Owre late for what?"

"The gentleman you let into the train, he's off without his parcel, and awin' me sixpence. What am I to do?"

"Do? do what you like—take the next train."

"Where to?"

"Edinburgh—that's where he's gone to."

"Edinburgh? Do ye think I'm made o' money?" cried Davie.

"No, but you've legs—you can walk it, or pay yourself oot o' the parcel," said the man, with a careless laugh; and with these words ringing in his ears, Davie slowly left the station to cudgel his brains in vain for a better solution to the difficulty.

"Pay mysel' oot o' the parcel? No; Auld Starkey aye said there was a crooked way and a strecht way to a thing—I'll tak the strecht ane, an' that's the road to Edinburgh. I could walk the forty miles in a day if my boots were guid; but, as they're no, I suppose it'll take me twa. What a long walk for sixpence! Well, I canna be ony waur off in the country than I have been in the toon; so here's for a tramp."

In this last reflection, however, Davie made his first miscalculation. In the town he could run errands, carry parcels, hold horses, black boots, or sell apples or papers, according to the state of his funds or the season of the year; but in the country all these ways of turning over a penny were beyond reach. He got out to the country road, hopeful and cheery as the sparrows he had been watching, and while his breakfast lasted felt rather pleased than otherwise at the unexpected task. But, after putting fully twelve miles between him and the city, he stopped under a cool hedge, very hungry, very sore in the feet, and a little tired. Worse, he was quite uncertain of the future, even supposing he should reach the capital in safety; and all his thinkings and plannings how to search out his eccentric employer only landed him in more hopeless uncertainty and bewilderment.

"He didna leave me his address—maybe he had nane to leave, for he looked a stranger, an English tourist or something," he said, dubiously taking out the parcel and inspecting

it in vain. "The address micht be inside. I wonder if I should open it and see?"

He turned it over and over, weighed it in his hand, smelt it even, and at last, after ten minutes' hesitation, decided to open it.

Undoing the string, he removed the cover only to reveal another paper equally strong underneath, and tied with the same care; but what particularly attracted his attention was a printed label, pasted on this undercover, and only partly removed by scraping and tearing. Davie's skill in reading was not great, and the words moreover were nearly obliterated; but, as it was all in print, he at last made out the word "jeweller" and the last half of a proper name, but whether the name and the word referred to a Glasgow or an Edinburgh firm he was quite unable to decide.

"I wish I had kent this afore I started," he said softly to himself. "I micht have gane through a' the jewellers and asked; but I'll try Edinburgh first. I wonder what's inside?"

He took off cover after cover of paper, and at last one of fine tissue, and then the glittering contents lay flashing in the sun before his eyes. Well might he start nearly up on his feet at the sight, and look round with a quick beating heart, almost as guiltily as if he had been a thief. The contents were a brooch of Scotch pebble and cairngorm, set in gold; a pair of ear-rings to match; and a gold bracelet, which so flashed with liquid light that he almost instantly jumped at the truth.

"They're diamonds—I could swear they're diamonds," he gasped out, with a painful flutter at his heart. "I dinna wonder at him sayin' I micht as weel lose my heid. They maun be worth an awfu' lot o' money."

His first feeling was one of fear and trembling; his second was—well, what would yours have been, kind reader, had you been planted down on that lonely road under exactly similar circumstances? Davie was only human, and very poor, ragged, and hungry besides, so is it really a wonder that the temptation came? What could be easier than for him to bury the flashing jewels there and then, and then, if arrested, swear he never saw them. "Pay yourself out of the parcel," the railway starter had carelessly suggested; and the evil thought now came back upon him with a blinding force which dyed his face crimson to the roots of the hair. It was an awful moment; and when it was over, Davie was white as a sheet, with the cold sweat trickling down his temples, but a faint smile taking the place of the temporary look of guilt.

"No," he firmly whispered to himself, covering up the tempting jewels with their wrappings and replacing them in his breast. "Auld Starkey aye said there was ruin in the first step from the stretcht road; and I promised the gentleman that I wadna bolt wi' them. I'll gang to Edinburgh, and I'll find him though I should hae to walk my feet off!"

This was good in theory, but in practice it was to prove no easy task. Davie limped along other eight miles, and then, after trying in vain to appease his hunger with some ears of wheat plucked by the roadside, he ventured to approach a farmstead, with the intention of asking a day's work to help him on his way, when suddenly one of the farm-labourers appeared, slipped the leash of the watch-dog, and shouted—

"There's another! at him, Cæsar! tear him up—skin him alive!"

The dog, nothing loth, sprang forward with great flaming eyes and rolling tongue, but Davie waited to see no more. He flew from the spot with the dog at his heels, till he was many miles further on his way, and the dog at last out of sight. Then he sank exhausted on the ground, and was glad to crawl in among some haystacks, where he fell into an uneasy slumber, and dreamt of great dogs with shining eyes chasing him, and swallowing the parcel in his breast. Next morning, though a good deal refreshed, he was much slower in his movements, owing to an unaccountable weakness which had crept over him; and in passing a cottage by the roadside where a basin of porridge had been put out on the sill of the window to cool, he halted, and in spite of his love of honesty, eyed them hungrily, feeling strongly tempted to snatch them up and run like the wind.

He turned away with a sigh, and it was well that he did so; for just at his elbow he found one of the county police ensconced in a gap of the hedge, and patiently awaiting his decision. It was a closer shave than either Davie or the policeman dreamt of; for had he been taken into custody upon however trifling a charge, and the jewels he carried found on him, nothing could have saved him from penal servitude; for, of course, his story of the meeting with Mr Cloggers would have been only laughed at. He dragged himself on a few more miles, and at last sat down dejected by a pump, in front of some cottages.

"I'll hae to beg," he groaned at last to himself. "I've never dune it yet, but I canna haud oot ony langer. If the

gentleman had only gien me the sixpence, I could have managed it fine."

A touch on the arm made him look round, and then he saw a child holding out to him a big flour scone, fresh and warm from the girdle.

"Mother sent me oot wi' that to ye," said the child, pointing to a cottage window, at which the mother stood watching.

Poor Davie! the gift came so suddenly and unexpectedly, that he could only stagger round, with filling eyes, in the direction of the window, and bob his head and tug at his forelock in an uncouth fashion, after taking off his ragged cap, as if the poor cottager had been queen of the land. Then he huskily gasped out—"Thank ye, oh, thank ye!" to the child, and shuffled off to where he could devour the bread unseen.

New bread is said to be bad for the stomach; but Davie ate it up sweetly, every scrap, and never felt a bit the worse. He was stronger too after the meal, and held on nobly till far on in the day, when a poor stonebreaker shared with him, unasked, his simple dinner of bread and cheese. But with all these helps, night found him still some miles from Edinburgh, and he was glad to creep in below a hedge and try to sleep till daylight. He started again before dawn, and was soon rewarded with a glimpse of the castle and tall spire of the city looming up on the horizon; and by nine o'clock he was limping slowly through the wide streets. But he found no Mr Cloggers. He looked about in every likely place, and even described the gentleman to several policemen, but the afternoon wore on and found him as far as ever from the object of his quest. In his anxiety to get done with his mission and rid himself of the jewels, he had not once ventured to go near any of the railway stations at which he might have picked up an odd penny or two to support him in his weary search; and it thus came about, that in going up Lothian Street he felt his legs suddenly, and without the slightest warning, give way beneath him, and then found himself looking up off the pavement in a dizzy way at a great crowd of curious faces which had suddenly collected about the spot. Some one ran into a public-house for a jug of water, which they poured on his face, though his white and starved appearance called loudly for something stronger to be poured into his mouth; but still he was slow to come round, and still the crowd swelled around him, till it acquired

sufficient dimensions to attract me from hurrying along Bristo Street to dinner to learn the cause of the tumult.

I saw a poor starved boy lying flat on his back, looking like enough death to startle the most indifferent; and stooping down, raised him in my arms just as he began to open his eyes.

"Hullo, laddie, what's wrong with you?" I said, as soon as he had had a good stare around.

"I—I dinna ken," he slowly and hazily got out. "I jist felt my legs gie way below me, and a'thing turnin roond."

I looked into his face keenly and curiously.

"When did you eat anything?" I asked, in a hushed whisper.

"Yesterday—at dinner time."

"I thought so," I shortly answered. "Do you think you could walk round to the next street with me, if I help you?"

"I'll try," he said heartily; and in five minutes I had him round in my own house, where some thin soup brought him round far more quickly than the jug of water had done in the open air.

As soon as he had made a hearty meal, I began to question him as to what had brought him from Glasgow—having guessed that much from his tongue. Here, however, he showed a strange reticence, until some remark fell from him to the effect that he was thinking of going to the Police Office about something, and my own connection with the staff was revealed, when he frankly told his whole story, ending by bringing out the parcel and opening it before my eyes.

Never was I more astonished or delighted. I could scarcely believe my own eyes, as I looked at the flashing gems and turned them over in my hands. My feelings will be understood when I state that I recognised them instantly as stolen property, about which a mystery still hung. A lady had walked into a jeweller's in Glasgow, in company with her husband, had bought the jewels—the bracelet alone, I may say, cost nearly a thousand pounds—and, resisting the offer of the jeweller to send them to her hotel, placed the parcel in her reticule, which closed with a spring, and then, stepping into the cab in waiting, had been driven to her hotel with the reticule hanging over her arm. By some mistake of the cabman, they were put down, not at their own hotel, but at one about thirty yards off, and this short distance was walked rather than give any trouble to the cabman. Upon entering the hotel the reticule was at once examined, found firmly shut;

opened, and found empty! The parcel was gone! So astounded was the lady that for some time she felt certain that the jeweller had forgotten to put the parcel into the bag; but this faint hope being rudely dissipated, there remained nothing but to inform the police.

Such was the story of the jewels as officially forwarded to us. The police were busy hunting for them in Glasgow, while in Edinburgh a poor street-waif had come and placed them without trouble or search in my hands.

I hurried the honest lad along to the Superintendent at the High Office, who heard the story in silence, though not without looking down with curious interest upon the boy who had carried such a treasure in his breast, and yet been found sinking with hunger on the street.

But though we had got the plunder we wanted more—the man who had stolen it. Our first business, of course, was to cross-examine Davie in every possible way, and make sure that he could recognise his strange employer again.

After taking down Davie's description in writing, I turned up the books and found that it tallied exactly with that of a "gentleman" who had arrived from Glasgow three mornings before, and had been loitering about the city ever since. As for proof of the truth of Davie's story, we had that in the following advertisement which had appeared for two mornings in succession in both Edinburgh and Glasgow papers:—

"REWARD.—If the boy who carried a small parcel for a gentleman on the morning of the 2d July from Saltmarket Street, Glasgow, to Buchanan Street Station, will bring or forward the same to T. C., care of Mr Flannigan, Advocates' Close, High Street, Edinburgh, he will be handsomely rewarded."

Of this advertisement, of course, Davie had been quite ignorant, not only because his reading powers were limited, but because the morning papers had not been regularly placed on his breakfast-table since leaving Glasgow. With us it was different. Putting the advertisement and Davie's story together, we had just as clear a case and as neat a clue as the heart of man could desire.

To make sure work of the capture, however, I thought proper to enlist Davie for the time being in the staff, and, finding him remarkably apt in the new line, I primed him well in every little detail which I wished carried out; and then, disguising myself well, and giving the parcel of jewels once

more into Davie's keeping, we took our way up to Advocates' Close about dusk, followed by several gliding shadows, who silently blocked up the narrow close as soon as we had vanished up the stair towards Mr Flannigan's well-known abode. This shebeener and reset himself opened the door, and, after considerable demur and cross-questioning, Davie was admitted to an inner room, where the veritable Tom Cloggers sat drinking and playing dominoes with an Edinburgh thief.

There were no lights, and it was already dusk ; but the moment the London thief fairly recognised Davie's features he sprang forward, taking no notice of me, and shook the boy heartily by the hand.

"So you saw the advertisement," he began with the greatest eagerness, "and have brought the parcel?"

"Yes, *he* showed it me ;" and Davie pointed backwards with his thumb at me. "I want you to look at them, and see that they're a' richt—that a' that's there is yours ;" and he produced the parcel, which was instantly torn open, and held gloatingly under the eyes of the two thieves.

"My lad, you're a brick," cried Cloggers. "Yes, all this is mine ; they're all here exactly as you got 'em. Take a taste, boy, take a taste. I was beginning to fear I should never see you again."

But Davie shrank back from the proffered drink, which was then shoved past him towards me. Now was my time. I put out my hand swiftly and silently, and grasped not the glass, but the bunch of jewels in his other hand ; and then, before the cry of astonishment had well left his lips, I had sprung forward, whistled sharply, and seized him by the throat. The other thief sprang up with an oath, but he no sooner recognised me than he staggered faintly backwards, crying—

"Curses on it, it's M'Govan ! You're done, Cloggers, as neat as ninepence !"

But Cloggers did not seem to think so. He wrenched himself free, struck right and left, and finally made for the open window, intending to make a leap for it. My hands were fully occupied in hounding off the proprietor himself and saving the jewels ; but in a moment my auxiliary, Davie, had taken in the critical position, and had dauntlessly rushed on the London thief and grappled with him. They struggled together for a moment, and then, with a great swing the brave boy was lifted from his feet and hurled bodily out at the window.

There was a horrified shout from below ; but then the

struggle was over, for the outer door was forced and the three rascals secured ; after which poor Davie's senseless form was picked up and carried fast down to the medical inspector, who ultimately ordered his removal to the Infirmary. The fall was only of a single storey, but it was bad enough to keep him on his back for nearly two months. But, after all, his evidence was not needed, for Cloggers wisely agreed to plead guilty, confessing how he had opened the lady's reticule in a sudden crush, and next morning, being afraid of being stopped and searched at the station, had employed Davie to carry the stolen goods, and then been scared by the sudden appearance of a detective. He got seven years' penal servitude, while his companions, for being found in such bad company, got each thirty days.

As for Davie, the story got him many friends ; a place as van-driver to a commission agent was offered him ; and in the same establishment he is now foreman—"all through Old Starkey," as he is wont to say.

A CHILD'S POWER.

IN trying to describe poor Sparrow's fight to be honest,* I promised to give another case to illustrate the power of a child's words; and now it falls to me to fulfil the pledge before passing on to The Ruffian's last crime. Between the two cases, however, there is an intimate connection, inasmuch as by the first Simon Penbank was prepared more fully for a change; and by his detective skill in the second, he called forth a remark from me which was destined to have an important influence on his whole after life.

About the time of The Ruffian's daring leap from the top of the mail train, Simon Penbank, wearied and depressed with a vain search through the whole city for traces of this scoundrel, was slowly making his way up Blackfriars Wynd to his home in the condemned land. To say that he was miserably clad, hungry, worn down, and unhappy, would be only to record his almost everyday condition. Simon was never paid in advance, nor trusted the length of his nose, except in the solitary case of Nosie Mincher with the ten shillings; and, as The Ruffian was still at large, Penbank was at that moment poor indeed. In plain truth, he had only one penny in the world, and the rags in which he stood; and with that solitary copper resting in his cold palm, he was about to turn up a stair near his queer home, with the intention of enjoying a pennyworth of shebeen whisky for his supper, when, through the darkness and stillness, there fell on his ears a sound like the suppressed sob of a child.

"Ha! another of those swarming germs of humanity," he said, with the indifference of a man of experience. "Strange how they increase under our very feet. Where are our statesmen that they cannot put the nuisance down? The more oppressed, the more hungry, the more miserable the people are, the more they accumulate these little pests about their skirts. Let me pause for a moment's enjoyment in frightening the little beggar away."

* *Brought to Bay*, p. 109.

Poking forward into the gloom, and craning his neck on every side, the spy at last discerned the form of a child, seated on a stone, leaning back on the rough wall trying to blow some warmth into his fingers, and crying in a suppressed way in spite of himself. The boy was very small and thin, but beside the tall scraggy form of the spy he looked a perfect mite.

"Hullo, hullo!" roughly interposed Penbank, trying to speak in the harsh tones of a policeman, "what's all this noise about? What are you crying there for?"

The child stopped and looked up at the tall figure in some wonderment and awe; but then finding that it was only a man, not a ghost, it answered very simply—

"Oh, I'm so told, and all the lights are goin' out."

A shade of the harshness and malicious gloating disappeared from Penbank's face—the words came out so pitifully and trustfully; and stooping down he took the child's morsel of a hand in his own, not roughly, but gently, as if he wished to warm it within his own.

"Cold, are you? My young friend, that is not surprising—we are nearly into winter now," replied Penbank, with a stately dignity which made the child open his eyes. "Why are you not at home?"

"'Cos I'm ooseless, and muzzer's gone into the black hole; and the child sobbed again, and tried to get its cold hand away to have a dabble at its eyes.

"You're useless? Who said that?" asked Penbank, in somewhat husky tones, and with a sudden hushed interest.

"The bad woman said that—muzzer toot me, and tuddled me in a bosie, and clier over me, and said I was to be a dood 'tittle boy, and 'tay with the bad woman till she toot me to a poorhouse. Then she lied, all white, on a bed, and they shut her up in a box and put her in a black hole. I'm doin' away," and the child's voice sank to a mysterious whisper as it looked round to make sure that it was not overheard—"I'm doin' away to loot for the hole, *and cleep in beside her.*"

There was a strange husky sound now, something between a grunt and a sob, and it came from the direction of Simon Penbank's throat; then he got another of the loose stones, drew it close, and sat down beside the child.

"They didn't strike you, did they?" he hoarsely inquired.

"Iss—they ticked me," sobbed the child, agitated afresh at the recollection, "and they fighted and stluck one anuzzer, and

told me to do to my muzzer. I've been lootin' for the hole, but I tant find it."

Simon Penbank blew his nose loudly in a very ragged remnant of a handkerchief, and took some time to the process, and then huskily continued—

"What's your name, my little friend?"

"Teeve."

"Steve? What else?"

"Nossing."

"Nothing else?—that's queer."

"What's oors?" asked the child, looking up curiously into the bloated face.

"My name is Simon," answered the tall spy, feeling like an elephant trying to be friendly with a titmouse.

"Timon? That's nice," said the child, becoming confidential. "Is oor muzzer in a black hole too, Timon?"

There was a queer silence after this question; and looking up in surprise, the child found that his new friend was looking away up, as if intently examining the roof of one of the dark buildings overhanging the spot. A still closer inspection revealed the fact that the old man's mouth was twitching and jerking painfully, and then a shivering gasp told the real state of affairs.

"Don't cly, Timon; don't cly," said the child, beginning to sob and knuckle his eyes in sympathy. "I'm solly for oo; don't cly, and I'll sing oo a hymn."

"I'm not crying, my young friend," replied Simon, after bringing the ragged handkerchief into active operation for a suspiciously long interval. "A mere cold in the head, that's all."

"What oo lubbing oor eyes for, zen?" simply asked the child.

"Ah! my young friend," replied Penbank, with a desperate effort at his usual elation and sprightliness, and a hideous contortion which was meant for a cheerful smile, "I rub them because there is—a something which affects them—something that comes at very wide intervals with me, and makes them require rubbing."

But this dignified speech was all Greek to the child. A painfully puzzled look crossed his atom of a face, and then he said—

"Why don't oo peak 'ike me?"

"How *peak* like you?" asked Penbank, with a frightful elephantish flounder that made him feel as large as a pyramid.

"That's better," said the child, in decided approval, creeping closer to him and nestling among his rags; "oo'll det on bym-bye. Now, oo must say, 'Poor wee Teeve—tuddle in a mammy's bosie.'"

Penbank hesitated, and stared down in the child's face with goggling eyes.

"Tum away, now," cried the child, encouragingly but imperatively.

"Poor wee Teeve," began Penbank.

"Dood! dood!" cried Steve, clapping his small hands in approval.

"Tuddle in a mammy's bosie," continued Penbank, with a sigh of relief, but actually putting his arm round the mite of humanity, as if he could have cuddled it with real and unaffected pleasure.

"That's nice," said the child, resting his head wearily on the shabby waistcoat of the spy, and placing his small hand confidently in his own. "Will oo cake me to the black hole to my mammy, and tell her they ticked me?"

"I fear me much—that is, I don't know the road," said Penbank evasively, and with a gulp at something in his throat. "But we can look for it to-morrow."

"Iss; but Teeve's head's sore, sore."

"Ah, but it'll be better to-morrow," cheeringly responded Penbank, taking the throbbing temples in his hands. "But you mustn't stay out in the cold. Won't you go home?"

"Fere's 'at?"

The question came out clear and prompt, but to it Simon had no answer; then, while he was shuffling, the child came to his rescue.

"Where's *oor* house?" he asked.

"Ah! mine—hem—of course," slowly replied Penbank. "My palace is a few steps further up the wynd here. I sit rent free, and nobody seeks to disturb me—except the rats," he added to himself.

"Then let's go zere—I want to seep," said Steve decidedly, holding up his arms to be lifted. "Oo'll cally me;" then, holding back suddenly, he interposed, "but oo'll not let the bad woman tum and cake me away?"

"No, no, she sha'n't get near you," was the assuring response. "Be sure she sha'n't, for I'll watch you all night myself."

"Dood Timon! Teeve 'ikes oo," said the child gratefully,

now submitting readily to be carried up the wynd and round to the back of the condemned land. "Then after tupper we'll sing togezzar—nice hymns—oh, it's dood! What hymns do oo know, Timon? Muzzer learnt me nice ones—Tanaan, bright Tanaan; and, oh! lots more."

Penbank remained silent, and Steve looked up with a surprised and aggrieved expression.

"Don't oo like 'at one, Timon?" he softly inquired.

"My young friend, I like them all," desperately blurted out Simon Penbank; "but I—I believe I've forgotten my hymns."

"Fordot 'em?" echoed the child, perfectly incredulous. "How tan oo sing 'em zen?"

"That's just where it is, my young friend," slowly responded Penbank, feeling guilty enough to have sunk into the ground, and getting out the truth with a sudden blurt—"The fact is, I don't sing 'em at all;" and then seeing a look of horror creeping over the child's face, he hurriedly added—"But never mind that; I can learn 'em off you, you see."

But the child was only half satisfied, and, after a steady look into the bloated face, said—

"Oo don't sing 'em at all? Then what do oo do at night before oo go to seep?"

"I—I don't do anything," slowly stammered out Penbank, feeling guiltier than ever under those guileless eyes. "Except—yes," and he brightened a little at getting out of the fix—"except think over what I may do next day."

"Don't oo say any prayers?" asked the child, softly and winningly, smoothing Penbank's cheek with his little hand.

There was a longer pause than ever, and the guilty shuffle of Penbank's eyes appeared to deeply pain his new companion.

"Peak, Timon," he entreatingly said, at last putting one arm quite round the old man's neck and nestling closer; "peak, and I'll tuddle oo."

"I rather think," reluctantly answered Penbank—"I rather think I've forgotten my prayers too."

"What a bad old man oo must be!" exclaimed Steve, in horror. "No, oo's not bad, or oo wouldn't tuddle me and cally me about. But wouldn't oor muzzer be solly oo'd fordot how to say 'B'ess fazzar—b'ess muzzer?'"

There was a strange choking pause in the conversation, and, putting his soft hand out through the darkness to Penbank's

face, Steve felt that the cheeks were wet. Then his whole manner changed, and he impulsively cried out—

“Never mind, Timon—we’ll say ’em togezzer, and I’ll put in a bit for oo—‘Dod bless dood old Timon.’ That’s it—velly nice. And oo’ll not cly any more—nor be andry—but sing hymns and tuddle me till I seep in a bosie;” and while he thus spoke, and arranged matters, he was carried softly and tenderly up into Simon Penbank’s “palace.”

The spectacle did not seem to please the boy greatly. When he was set down in the middle of a dark room, with no windows, no fire, and no furniture, and with only a heap of straw in a corner for a bed, a dissatisfied expression crept over his face which the other could dimly discern by the light creeping in from the dark windows.

“What a dark house!” said Steve; “I don’t ’ike it. And fere’s the fire?”

“Oh, the fire—of course—the fire,” dubiously stammered Penbank. “Well, you see this is only a sleeping apartment, Steve; I never need a fire in that.”

“Fere’s the fire zen?” simply inquired the child.

“There’s no fire at all, that’s the fun of the thing,” brightly responded Penbank, putting the best face he could on the matter. “We just sit down in the bed here, and cuddle close to the wall, where the wind doesn’t get at us, and tell stories, and all that, and fancy we’re sitting at a big fire warming our toes. Ha, ha, ha! that’s good, isn’t it?” and he poked the child in the side, and pretended to chuckle himself nearly black in the face, to make him laugh in concert.

For a while it seemed as if the little ruse were to be successful. Steve cuddled down at the spot indicated; but by and by the discontented expression returned to his face, and he abruptly asked—

“Why don’t oo live in a nicer house, Timon? It’s so dark, and told, and nasty.”

If Steve had possessed the wisdom of Socrates himself, he could not have put to Simon Penbank a more staggering question. The eccentric thief stared and stared at his small questioner, and put on his most dignified look, and ransacked his brain for some of his set replies about the injustice of the world, fate being against him, and every man being a thief but himself; but no words came to his lips. At last, unable to look steadily into the clear eyes of the child, he hastily stammered out, “I think you’d better sing a hymn.” Then, having extracted an

imperative promise from Penbank to join in with him, Steve sang the following verse :—

“Tanaan, bright Tanaan,
The glorious land of Tanaan ;
Oh, Tanaan is a happy place—
Tum, let us do to Tanaan.”

The infantile voice quivered strangely through the deserted building, with an eccentric grunting accompaniment joining in from Penbank's rusty throat ; but, at the end of the verse, the child broke down, and began to sob.

“I wis I knowed fer Tanaan was, I'd do to it now,” he chokingly ejaculated. “I want muzzer ! oh, I want my muzzer !”

Greatly agitated himself, Simon Penbank had some difficulty in soothing him into calmness ; but when at last he did succeed, Steve suddenly looked up in his face, and said piteously, “I'm hungly, Timon ; I'm so hungly.”

“Hungry?—is that all?” cheerfully echoed Penbank, starting up with alacrity. “Suppose we have supper then? I mean suppose *you* have supper. I've had mine already—last night, I mean—am positively crammed to the throat with food ; but I've some money—a whole coin ; I meant it for something else, but no matter. What do you like to eat—trotters? I can get two for a penny—nice and soft, with lots of gristle ;” and Simon smacked his lips unctuously, as if the very thought of the trotters set his mouth a-watering, which, by the way, might actually have been the case.

“Are they tweet?” dubiously asked Steve.

“Not very sweet—but they're nice,” said Penbank temptingly. “Shall I get them?”

“I like to something tweet,” said Steve, after a moment's grave thought. “But don't tay long, 'cos I don't ike to be in the dark.”

Simon Penbank waited to hear no more, but cut down the stairs to the open air, and then had a struggle with himself at the bottom of the stair leading up to the shebeen. The penny—the sole coin he possessed—lay in his palm, where he suggestively weighed it.

“Toothful of vile fire, supposed to be drink, or a bite to the child—which shall it be?” he muttered to himself, swaying with uncertainty. “Toothful of fire, bite for child—bite for child wins the day !” and then he very considerably frightened

the occupant of an eating-house further down by rousing him out of his bed, merely to supply him with two halfpenny sheep's trotters. After some grumbling, the mighty order was executed, and in post haste he got back to the condemned land, and watched the famished child devour every morsel with a pleasure which, from its very unselfishness, was quite new to him. Then Steve showed him how to kneel down and clasp his hands while he went over his prayers, and put in the bit he had spoken of about Simon himself, and then this queerly assorted pair lay down among the straw and slept till morning. Shortly after daybreak Simon awoke, and for more than an hour gazed down on the calm face of the innocent child, sleeping in his arms with a strange flutter of emotion, such as he had not felt in his breast for nearly half a century. Nothing he could remember in his long career of crime and cunning—not even the death of his own mother—had ever given him such a tug back as the artless talk and confiding trust of this lost child. But was the child lost? I think not; I am certain not. All Penbank's subsequent sifting and searching, which was not of the dullest, could not discover a loving father to Steve, yet I am certain that in the widest and grandest sense of the word Steve was not fatherless. The strange pair were apart and alone, but they were to drift together and remain so for life, exercising a strange influence on each other's whole being. The first surge of that influence was now stirring the breast of the eccentric old thief—in half-formed resolutions after honesty, truthfulness, and religion. When I show that these resolutions were weak and almost aimless, and that they were dispelled by the first demand made upon him in his new responsibility, I show only that Simon was human, like the rest of us.

About an hour after daybreak, when the rumble of the stirring city was beginning to be heard, even in this strange retreat, Steve awoke. At first he cried bitterly to find that he was not in his mother's arms; and then, after Simon had exerted himself to the utmost to soothe and amuse him, he knelt down and said his little prayer, again putting in the little bit about "Dood old Timon," and then very promptly announced that it was his intention to get up.

"But it isn't time yet," hesitatingly demurred Simon Penbank, who had reasons of his own for wishing delay. "Lie down and sleep a little longer, and then we'll get up and go out together."

Steve, unconvinced, but trained to obedience, tried man-

fully to obey, and determinedly shut his eyes and tried to feel warm and sleepy among the straw, with the cold wintry wind coming whistling in on them ; but his eyes would get open in spite of himself, and at last the long-delayed words forced themselves out in a trembling whisper—

“ But I’m so hungly, Timon ! I want my breakfast ; and then I’ll be dood and do to seep.”

The piteous look, the pinched and sharp-boned face of the child, with the trembling eagerness with which the request was proffered, went straight to Simon’s heart with a force which carried all before it. All his thoughts of honesty vanished like a flash, and, strange to say, he started up with a greater courage for crime than he had ever before felt.

“ Yes, Steve—I’m going out to get it,” he hurriedly responded. “ It’s just down the stairs—I mean some little distance off—but you must lie down and sleep till I bring it. Don’t move or go out, or the bad woman will get you and take you to the poorhouse ;” then, covering the child over with straw, and seeing that he was already satisfied and nearly asleep, Penbank slipped down the three stairs, and found himself in the open air, holding a vain counsel with himself as to whence the breakfast was to come.

“ If I go to M’Indoe, he’ll laugh at me, and tell me I have tried the starvation dodge too often already,” he feverishly reflected. “ If I go to M’Govan, he’ll tell me I ought to be ashamed to come before him with such a lie in my mouth, and that I should drink less and then I would eat more. At every hand I will be met with but one word—liar, liar, liar ! It is the old story of the lying boy—the shepherd, renowned in story, who was always crying ‘ Wolf ’ for the fun of the thing, but when the wolf really came, nobody believed him, and so he was eaten up. The wolf is at my palace door, and, while people are laughing at my frantic cries, I shall be quietly devoured. What a lesson is there contained, if I were not too hungry and needy to profit by it ! But have I gone over all my friends ? No, there is one—my old friend Mackintosh, the grocer. I have cheated and robbed him so often that he will not listen to a word I say ; but if I go to his house, he will probably be absent at the shop, when I may induce his wife to part. Ho, then, for the grocer’s house ! ”

Leaving the bottom of the wynd at which this resolution had been formed, Simon cut along the Cowgate to the little grocer’s shop bearing the name “ James Mackintosh,” and then,

having satisfied himself that the kindly old soul whom he had so often swindled was really in the shop, he slipped further along the street and turned into an entry leading to a remarkably clean and open yard, where he rapped dilligently for some time at a green-painted door. No one answering, he turned to the window, and peered in through the muslin blind; but not seeing through it very distinctly, he made bold to put to his hands and gently raise the sash. Now, I really do not think that he meant to commit a robbery; he was only led to it, as it were, by the strange train of circumstances; though, of course, had we caught him at it, such a plea in Court, however true, would have been only laughed at.

No one answered his imperative call on Mrs Mackintosh, so he inserted his head and shoulders at the open window, and was about to renew his cry in a louder key, when his eye fell on a purse, with a steel clasp, lying where it had been carelessly left, on the table by the window. Simon's heart gave a bound; he stretched over; felt the purse in his hand; knew that it was not empty, and with just one moment's hesitation, had it concealed in his palm, and his body withdrawn hurriedly from the open window. Not a soul was in sight, and with one quick hurl he had the sash down again and was off, out of the entry and down the Cowgate as fast as his legs could carry him.

He paused only once on the way, and that was to enter a shop and exchange some of the stolen money for food; and with this in his arms he got up to his "palace" in the condemned land, where his entrance was greeted with a shout of joy from little Steve, who stared at the good things in a perfect maze of wonder and delight.

"Fere did oo get it?" asked the child at length, with the utmost simplicity; but this was just the subject that Simon was most anxious to avoid. He shuffled guiltily under the child's gaze as he had never done under that of a policeman or detective; but Steve was not to be put off.

"Tum now, telly troose now, or me tant eat it," he imperatively said, holding up a small finger to enforce the command; "fere did oo get it?"

Penbank still hesitated, feeling guiltier than if he had just emptied the Bank of England; but then seeing the tears creeping into the child's eyes, he suddenly and impulsively exclaimed—

"I prigged it all!"

This was the most truthful burst that he had ever emitted,

but it was quite lost upon Steve. He only stared in wonderment—not understanding the words, and quite confused and dismayed at the old man's abject look of guilt. Instinctively, however, he seemed to feel that something was wrong, and that wrong he vaguely connected with the food on the floor before him. The tears gathered and gathered in his eyes till they came with a rush, and he lay convulsively sobbing on Simon's breast. When at last the guilty man had soothed him into quietness, and essayed to place the food once more before him, he turned away wearily.

"No eaty now, Timon," he said, nestling closer into the old man's bosom. "Teeve's head sore, sore! Dood old Timon—oo tind to wee Teeve. Holdy head, Timon; me want to seep, and do to my mammy;" and thus murmuring the fevered child fell fast asleep, and was again covered up among the straw.

But what of Simon Penbank? As soon as the child's eyes were closed his own became unusually distended. Then they glistened and goggled—then filled; and then he put up a cold knuckle to dabble away the tears.

"Simon! you old thief!" he cried energetically, shaking a clenched fist at himself. "You are a d——d old villain! You don't deserve to be a moment with such a pure little innocent. Go this instant and give yourself up; get into prison, where you deserve to be; and let the child be properly taken care of by the authorities."

Slowly, and with shaking hands, he gathered up the untasted food, re-covered it with the papers, and took himself off towards the door. Then another dabbling fit seized him, at the end of which he found himself back at the bed of straw kissing the hot cheek of the sleeping child, and wetting it with his tears. Then he shook off the momentary weakness, straightened himself into a semblance of his old dignity, dried his cheeks, and left the condemned land. Outside a cold wind was blowing, before which, upon any other occasion, he would have cowered and shrank. But his gait—usually a cautious, circumspect slink—was now charged to one singularly erect and resolute. He even graciously smiled and nodded to a passing policeman, inwardly speculating as to whether the man was to be he who should convey him in custody to the Police Office a few minutes later. At the grocer's little shop he paused, waited till the coast was clear, and then walked in and very deliberately seated himself at the counter. Old Mackintosh stared, as well he

night, at the unusual light in the eyes of the seedy spy ; but he opened his eyes still wider at his next movement. Very carefully and methodically Simon took out the various articles of food which he had that morning bought, and spread them on the counter ; then he produced a purse, which the grocer recognised with a start as that of his wife, and emptied its contents beside the articles of food.

"There," said Penbank, with a sigh of relief and a resolute tightening of the lips ; "I have to request you to send for a policeman to remove me to the Police Office. I have robbed you of this purse and money, with which I procured this food. I have no wish to eat any of it ; I merely desire to be taken up—to be put upon hard labour—the tarriest oakum that can be procured for love or money, or the hardest stone-breaking that ever made a man sweat his miserable life away. Don't stare at me ; I am not mad, though I have been nearly all my life. I am the worst scoundrel that crawls the earth ; have me taken up at once."

But the old grocer—a kindly, soft-hearted man—was too much taken by surprise to obey at once. He questioned Simon so closely, and withal so gently and tenderly, that in a burst of self-recrimination Simon revealed all about himself and the child, winding up with another imperative request to be taken up. But the old grocer would not have him taken up ; for long before Simon's account was finished, the wronged man was himself helping the narrator at the dabbling business, and when he got through, they merely laid their heads together, and had the fevered child removed to the comfortable home which Simon had so lately broken into, and there the child mended rapidly, visited every day by Simon, who was not yet in prison, nor likely to be for some time to come. In fact, Simon had at last really begun to think.

"If my first act of honesty and restitution is thus rewarded," he reasoned, as he left the house through which little Steve's feet were now joyously pattering, and where the man he had robbed had just pressed a shilling into his hand—"if this is the result of truthfulness and openness in one solitary case, what position might I not have held had I but adopted the practice earlier in life? I must make a change."

BURIED ALIVE.

DENNIS M'CARTHY was one of the laziest men in Edinburgh. He was a skilled worker—if we can concede skill to mixing lime and carrying bricks—and so strong as to put every labourer beside him to shame; yet, having ingeniously got himself enrolled as a member of three different sick and burial societies, he suddenly conceived the idea that to earn eighteen shillings a-week by being sick was a great deal better than earning fifteen by hard work. For the larger sum he had only to lie in his bed and smoke, and pull on a long face and sickly aspect when the doctor appeared, while for the smaller sum he had to sweat from six in the morning till six at night, wet or dry, foul or fine. Dennis chuckled hugely over the idea, and thought himself clever and smart in being able to carry it out.

It chanced, however, that Dennis, in his attempt to keep up the deception, was bitten at last. Lying steamed up in his bed all day, and rising and slipping out for a spree on a wet misty night in March gave him such a shock that for three weeks he was really laid up with bronchitis, a trouble which he had never known before. His crime was actually bringing its own punishment; for the confinement was enervating a robust system, which all the hard work before had seemed only to build up and make stronger.

But this real attack over which the doctor actually for a time looked grave, only sent his thoughts wandering after a still better stroke of business. It happened that his wife Molly, in consoling him on his recovery between the puffs at her pipe by his bedside, was the first to suggest the idea to his fertile brain.

“Ochone! but it's myself would have been the rich widdy if ye had died,” she feelingly remarked, “for I'd get seven pounds from each society, and niver a neighbour be the wiser. Three times seven is twenty-wan—and yer father like as not would pay for the berryin' of ye. Twenty-wan pounds! Couldn't I toss me head then and turn up me nose at the pore paiple, an' go off to Americy, an' be comfortable ever after?”

"Yes, but ye forget that I would be lyin' dead and could in the ground," grimly remarked Dennis, turning over in bed to light his pipe from her own. "Ye wouldn't have yer husband wid ye."

"Faith, I don' know," gravely remarked Molly, forgetting that she was forty and excessively ugly; "a widdy with money need never go long idle."

"Och, ye Jazebel!" was Dennis' only remark; but he puffed harder after it, as if her words had set him thinking.

"But there's no need to spake of it now, for ye're nearly well, an' may live a long time yet," pursued Molly, with a thoughtful look and a faint sigh.

Dennis said nothing, but raked up the tobacco in his pipe, with a kindling in his eye almost as bright and lurid as the glowing tobacco.

"Twenty-wan pounds!" he slowly remarked, stopping to spit. "Sure, it's a mighty fine sum; we could do a lot wid that."

"Not *we*," said Molly, in gentle correction, "for you would be dead, ye know."

"But I mane if I wasn't dead," said Dennis,—“if I was livin'”

"Livin'? Och ye Conauch donkey," echoed Molly, with supreme contempt. "How could ye get the money then?"

"Ah, how?—that's it," said Dennis, scratching his head vigorously. "'Twould be worth tryin' a lot for—twenty-wan pounds!" and as he relapsed into silence he seemed to see the money, all in bright golden sovereigns, resting heavily in the palm of his hand.

Dennis thought and thought, and scratched his head, and smoked more pipes of tobacco than he had done for many a night before. More: he and Molly conversed long and eagerly on one subject, a rare occurrence with both; and before they had finished had come to a most amicable agreement, which was a more uncommon circumstance than all the others put together.

Perhaps it was the excessive smoking or thinking which did the mischief, but Dennis next day certainly appeared to the doctor to have had a relapse. He was asleep, and the room carefully darkened, so that he might enjoy undisturbed "the only rest he had had for three days;" but his breathing, as the doctor stooped noiselessly over him to listen, seemed ominously heavy and slow. Molly, as might be expected, was in tears,

and most voluble in her grief, but appeared to stifle all to inquire if the doctor "thought Dennis was any better."

"Does his appetite continue good?" gravely asked the doctor, speaking low, that poor Dennis might not be awaked.

"Good?" cried Molly, in a heart-broken tone; "the pore cratur' hasn't ate a bite this week an' more. Sure, I don' know how he lives; an' he's that weak that a puff ov wind 'ud blow him over if he was to vinture out of bed."

"Oh, that will never do," said the doctor, who, being paid for such patients by contract, was rather pressed for time, and not the most knowing or skilful in the profession. "We must keep up the strength of the system at whatever cost. There is nothing to be alarmed at in the symptoms," he formally added, convinced that Dennis was sinking rapidly; "but I would recommend you to procure some brandy and administer it to him every hour or so, mixed with the white of an egg."

"Oh, doctor! dear doctor!" cried Molly, in a howl of grief that quite took the heart of the young medical attendant, "ye don't mane to tell me I'm to live to be a widdy, after all? Ochone, ochone! to be left without ever a man to protect me, and all my frinds in Americy—"

"Hush, hush!" interposed the doctor, seizing his hat and hastily making for the door to escape the storm of grief; "do as I have directed, and hope for the best;" and, bidding her good day, he hurried off to his next patient, feeling almost certain that he would soon have one less in the absence of Dennis M'Carthy. Perhaps, if his ears had been sharper, he might have heard Molly's howl of grief merge into a fit of laughter which threatened to choke her as he got beyond hearing; but such occasions are luckily not often made the subject of merriment, so he departed unsuspecting.

The home of the M'Carthy's, I may here explain, consisted of two miserable apartments in the Cowgate. The rooms were not connected, but situated at the end of a dark passage, with the two doors facing each other. One room sufficed for Dennis and his wife, and the other was generally let out to a couple of poor lodgers. At the time of Dennis' illness, however, this room had only a single occupant, and he was not a little surprised to find himself suddenly turned out for a trifling debt, and with a gruff intimation from Molly that she needed the room to herself.

On the following day when the doctor called as a matter of form he was not surprised to be met by Molly with a flood of

tears, and eye-moppings, and inarticulate "whirra-whirras." At first Molly could only point to the bed where Dennis had lain, which the doctor saw was now empty, but by and by she managed to gurgle out—

"Oh, doctor, why didn't you tell me the end was so near. Poor Dennis never kem round again after I gave him the brandy ye ordered; and however it came about I dunno, for he was the strongest man in the Cowgate, and used to say that he could lift a mountain on his head—"

"What? is the poor fellow really gone?" said the young doctor, rather staggered in spite of his forebodings.

"Yes, and mebbe if it hadn't been for you and your kindness he wouldn't have lived so long," artfully suggested Molly, with fresh moppings at her eyes. "Mebbe ye would like to see the corpse, doctor, which I have laid out beautiful in the room opposite—"

"Oh, no, it is not necessary—perhaps it will only distress you needlessly?" kindly replied the doctor. Nevertheless he allowed her to lead the way to the door of the room in question, which she unlocked with some difficulty, as if the key had become rusty in the wards and refused to turn quickly in the lock. The room was almost dark, but on a bed in the corner the doctor could see the stiff white outline, with which, inexperienced as he was, he had already become familiar. Molly lifted back the top of the sheet for a brief second, giving him a glimpse of a white face beneath, and talking volubly all the time, and then she dropped it hurriedly and resumed her passionate outcry in a way which made the young doctor retreat quickly without once touching the body or examining it in any way. At the door Molly's howls increased, and, hastily muttering some words of consolation, the doctor slipped five shillings into her hand and departed—perhaps to feel depressed for the remainder of the day, after being witness to such a scene of woe. The same day he reported, at the Registrar's request, that he had attended Dennis M'Carthy, now deceased, had seen the body after death, and assigned the cause of death to bronchitis. The same day the disconsolate Molly reported the circumstance to the Secretary of the three burial societies, and had the satisfaction of learning that in a day or two she would be the happy possessor of the longed-for twenty-one pounds.

Now thus far everything had seemed to flow easily and smoothly to the desired end; but here, through the fears, or

perhaps greed, of the principal characters concerned, there was to come the first slight check. Molly had flattered herself that her prospects of wealth would be quite unknown to her neighbours; but in this she was completely mistaken. Her neighbours were not different from other people's neighbours, and they knew her affairs as well as she did herself, and naturally prepared themselves for a grand entertainment when poor Dennis should be "waked." Sympathy of the most touching and appropriate kind was showered upon the lonely widow, the very singularity of her conduct in not showing the body to any one was forgiven and overlooked, for were they not one and all to look upon Dennis' face when making their "keen" at his wake? And would there not be whisky and pipes and 'baccy enough to make amends for all the poor widow's short-comings? Alas, for the short-lived hopes of selfish humanity. The eventful night came, and the dire news spread from one end of the Cowgate to the other—Dennis was to have no wake! Then, indeed, the rumours and stories which had floated only dimly and vaguely from one to another assumed form and shape; and wild and incoherent and wide of the truth though they were, they were destined to rouse more than one into activity and curiosity. The very night on which the wake ought to have taken place brought the Secretary of one of the burial societies up to the Head Office—just as M'Sweeny and myself were about to leave for the night.

"I want to see if you can help me in a *quiet* way in a matter which may be a great swindle or only a very ordinary occurrence," the man said, after he had given me his name and occupation; and he there and then proceeded to put before us an outline of the facts I have here described, as far as they were known to himself.

"Now this Dennis M'Carthy was one of the most cunning rascals we ever had on our books," he continued, after describing the formal announcement of the death. "He was one of those, I am convinced, who make it a business to get on a few societies, and then live off them by shamming sickness. I don't place much reliance upon reports and idle stories, but nothing would surprise me less than if you were to discover that the man has really been playing a double game."

"You mean that he is not dead?" I said, while M'Sweeny emitted a long and expressive whistle.

"I do mean that, and nothing else"

"Then how do you account for the doctor being deceived?" I asked. "Do you consider him an incompetent man, a knave, or a liar?"

"Neither," was the ready reply. "I simply think that the man he saw might have been really dead; but how are we to know that that man was Dennis M'Carthy? What is to hinder a rogue from putting another dead person in his place, and then keeping out of sight till he has robbed a few societies of their funeral monies?"

I was staggered by the thought, and for a moment silenced; but the ready wit of my chum dissipated my faith in the ingenious suggestion.

"Sure, thin, the doctor must have bin as blind as a bat not to know the difference in the two faces," he remarked. "Besides, there would be others always droppin' in, and they wouldn't be so aisly chated."

"This is just what I wish to be convinced of," acutely returned the Secretary. "So far as I have learned, all his acquaintances have had only the merest glimpse of the body, some have even been refused blankly. If I could be convinced that the body really is that of Dennis M'Carthy I would trouble no more in the matter; I would be rather glad than otherwise that he would cheat us no more."

"Then why not go down and look at the body yourself?"

"Because it would damage the reputation of the society to appear too suspicious. If one of you would undertake the task, as an entire stranger, and find from the description which I will give you of his features that it is really he, then no harm will be done, and the money will be paid without demur. But to raise a row might lose us not seven pounds but seven hundred."

"Then give me that job," said M'Sweeny, with energy; "I'll soon tell ye whether he's the man or not; and if so be as the two happen to be as like as peas in a plate, why, I'll find out the chatin' thaves some other way. Go on wid yer description."

Quite delighted at having shifted a disagreeable task off his own shoulders on to ours, the Secretary proceeded to describe Dennis minutely, giving, among other things, three distinct peculiarities by which he might be unmistakably identified—namely, a couple of teeth out in front, a twist in the nose, and a long spade mark across the forehead, caused by a gash received accidentally years before.

It was now too late for action ; besides which M'Sweeney wished to have as good a light as possible for the inspection of the suspected body ; so, after arranging for a meeting at the funeral next day, we left the Office together and separated to our several homes. The funeral, which all the disappointed "wakers" said had been hurried on with indecent haste, was appointed for four o'clock in the afternoon ; but long before that hour M'Sweeney, suitably attired for an Irish funeral, ascended the stair in the Cowgate and knocked gently at Molly's door. After a long delay, the door was unlocked and opened about an inch, to show a narrow strip of Molly's ugly face—quite enough to convince M'Sweeney that she was in a bad temper and would require delicate handling. M'Sweeney, however, was ready for the occasion ; and, putting on his most soothing smile, he slowly produced and held up under her nose a bottle of whisky, saying, in a doleful tone—

"Mrs M'Carthy, I couldn't do widout a last look at Dennis, poor boy, before he is shoved into the cold earth, an' I made so bould as to come up before the rest of the paiple and have a drop for better luck to you in your next husband."

Molly scowled, and at first tried to excuse herself on the ground that she was both busy and distressed ; but M'Sweeney, gradually making sure that he had struck her weak point, kept at her till she craned up her scraggy neck and turned the eye that didn't squint affectionately on the neck of the bottle in his hand, and then his simple inquiry as to whether she had a cork-screw did the rest, and he was admitted.

"But, sure now, I don't remember hearing Dennis ever spake of ye," she remarked, after drinking M'Sweeney's very good health, and receiving his name simply as "Barney." "Let's see, now—Barney ! Barney !—what's yer other name now?"

"Just Barney, and nothing else," said M'Sweeney, cautiously. "Ye wouldn't know me by the other—neither did Dennis, poor sowl. But I'll have to be goin', though to be sure I'll come along to the funeral ; only I wouldn't rest in me bed if I didn't see him afore he's screwed down. I'll just lave the bottle wid ye—ye'll need it all, poor woman, to keep up yer stringth ; and if ye'll let me have a look at the corpse I'll never forget ye ;" and M'Sweeney put on one of his sweetest and most irresistible looks, but was astonished to find for once that there was a widow in the world who was not particularly anxious to hook him. It required much persuasion and wheedling on his

part to gain his point; but at last she did get down the key and cross the passage to rattle it noisily in the lock. So hard, indeed, did the task of turning the key appear that at last M'Sweeny politely took the job in hand, and turning the key without difficulty, found himself in a very dark room—with a coffin at the darkest end, resting on a bed, with the lid at the side.

Now came the tug of war—and it did not take many moments watching to convince M'Sweeny that Molly was only acting a part, and that her grief was no more real than his own professed sympathy. M'Sweeny was hurried up to the coffin, where he got a hasty glimpse of the white face of a man; but as there was a white band across his brow, he could not tell whether it covered a scar, and as the lips were closed he could not tell whether two teeth were awaiting. The nose, indeed, had a twist, but M'Sweeny had seen that peculiarity at many a "wake," where it had never been seen before, and remained both unsatisfied and unconvinced. The artful Molly hurried him away from the side of the coffin, saying in her wild demonstrations of grief that it always upset her to be near it; but confused though M'Sweeny was with her noisy chatter, he yet had sense enough to do one business-like feat. The key had remained in the lock since their entrance; and seeing Molly overpowered with grief, he took upon him the office of locking up the room, which he did in a way of his own—noisily locking and *unlocking* it, trying it by the handle and apparently finding it secure, and then gravely handing the key to the distracted widow as if all were right.

"The sly chate of the world wouldn't give me a right look at him. Begorra! there's something at the bottom ov it, and I'll come back an' see him in spite of her. Good-bye, Mrs M'Carthy. Ochone, don't ax me to spake to ye, for I can't—good-bye, good-bye. Poor Dennis! poor Dennis!" and, shaking her impressively by the hand, and mopping his eyes with considerable dramatic skill, he left the passage and went noisily clamping down the stairs.

He was not long down; in fact, he was never out of the stair. After waiting for a minute or two below, he crept up on tip-toe, and, while Molly was perhaps sucking hard at the bottle he had left, slipped along the passage and softly opened the door he had pretended to lock, and as gently closed it behind him. And now comes the strangest miracle which I have ever had to record. The moment his soft footfall

sounded on the floor, the corpse in the coffin rose to a sitting position, saying aloud—

“Molly, ye blasted——Oh!” and as the last sound was emitted from the dead lips, the body flopped down again into the coffin, and appeared dead as before.

M’Sweeny seeing a dead man open his eyes and use his tongue, gave a cry of terror, which Molly, had she been on the alert, could not have missed hearing, and instantly started for the door. He did not even wait to close it after him, but flew as if a troop of goblins were at his heels. At the first landing, however, he stopped, a little ashamed of himself for fearing a ghost in broad daylight.

“I must have been mistaken; sure, the dead can’t move,” he whispered to himself. “If they could, they wouldn’t bury them; and if I was to tell it to Jamie, he’d only laugh at me, and tell everybody else. I’ll go back an’ finish me work.”

This was easily said; but though the sun was shining brightly on his pallid face, it took some time to get enough firmness in his shaking legs to convey him back to the room he had flown. Listening breathlessly, to make sure that Molly had not been alarmed, he again softly closed the door, and this time walked boldly to the window, and threw open the shutters to their widest. The room was still gloomy, as the window faced a dead wall, but not nearly so dark as before; and M’Sweeny gradually crept closer and closer to the coffin, ready to fly at a moment’s notice should it again make the slightest movement. Three different times M’Sweeny advanced his hand to raise the white flap covering the still face, and as often did he bring it back with a shrinking shudder. The third time he chanced to drop his fingers on the coffin lid in front; and as he gripped it hard to support or steady himself, he was astonished to feel the cloth with which it was covered sink under his fingers, as if covering not a solid board, but a rough hole knocked in the wood. At first M’Sweeny started, then he lifted the coffin lid, and blew through the miserable coffin cloth to convince himself, and then paused; winked knowingly, with the point of his finger raised to his nose, and emitted a dumb whistle; while the roguish twinkle in his eyes would instantly have told any one who could have seen it, that at last he had grasped the secret.

Now, M’Sweeny had been frightened; had shown that he was frightened; and nothing piqued his professional vanity more than the discovery of this weakness. Before the grin

mantling his face had subsided, he had determined to be revenged.

"If any one had seen me run, they would have thought I was frightened," he said aloud, "but I wasn't; for, of course, I knew 'twas only the *nirves* made the thing move, which I've heard tell are mighty sthrong in some corpses. I've a good mind to screw it down with this owld carpenter's chisel, to keep it from frightening any of the other paiple;" and M'Sweeny roguishly listened at the coffin, as he noisily placed the perforated lid on the top of it, to hear what effect the threat would produce. But there was no sound or movement; and, true to his word, he very coolly put the lid in its place and screwed it down. This done, he softly stooped and examined a sack in a corner of the room, and was not surprised to find it filled to the top with stones and earth, such as might be used to weight a coffin when there was no body to go into it. Again M'Sweeny winked, and again the fingers went expressively up to touch his nose; and then seating himself beside the coffin, he thrust his finger through the cloth wherever he could feel a hole in the wood, saying aloud—

"Och, Dennis, my jewel, but ye've got more air in yer coffin than ye have in yer poor body. Ochone, ochone! to think that ye'll never walk the streets again, except wid yer feet first and the paiple carryin' ye! Oh, whirra, whirra! to think that paiple should be livin' one day an' dead the next!"

Here there was a perceptible motion within the coffin, and M'Sweeny had some difficulty in forcing back a laugh and continuing his "keen."

"Poor Dennis! poor sowl!" pathetically continued M'Sweeny; "somebody else'll carry his hod of lime, and whistle just the same when carryin' it as he did himself. Another man'll eat his praities and marry his widdy; and then get all the benefit of his *funeral money*. Och, ye poor sinner! ye'll be buried in the could earth while we're all drinking your very good health in a noggin of potheen. Och, Dennis, me jewel, why did ye die?"

An ordinary mourner would soon have tired and gone off; but not so M'Sweeny. It still wanted two hours of the time appointed for the funeral, and for nearly the whole of that time did he patiently sit there "keening" over Dennis and satirically heaping up his virtues to the skies. Then some of the people invited to the funeral began to arrive; and, after showing them in, M'Sweeny began to get anxious as to the non-appearance of

Molly. Stepping into the opposite room, he found her in a helpless condition on the floor, but at last roused her sufficiently to make her aware that the people were beginning to assemble for the funeral. After several ineffectual attempts to rise, Molly gripped M'Sweeny hard by the arm, and drew him down till his ear was in full range of her whisky-laden breath—

"Whisht, ye devil—listen," she thickly got out. "When the coffin's screwed down, bring them *all* in here—the undertaker and the rest—to get a drop o' drink ; while I go into the room, all by myself, to see that it's all right. Faith, that whisky's taken my head, an' I donno how I'm to howld the screw-driver. Whisht, what am I sayin' ? I said the cork screw, darlin'—the cork screw. I'll get a batin' for tasting, I know I will. Bedad, I've a moind—a good moind—to go to sleep an' *let things take their own course*."

"But, sure now, the coffin's screwed down all right," said M'Sweeny, with twinkling eyes ; "and whisht !—whisper a moment—it feels heavy—just as if there was stones and earth in it, instead of poor Dennis."

"Och, then, Dennis is all right," gasped the drunk woman, with a sign of satisfaction, taking a pull at the bottle. "He's screwed it down himself, like a sinsible man, without waitin' for the undertaker."

"How could a dead man screw down his coffin and himself in the inside of it?" cried M'Sweeny, beginning to wish that I would arrive and put an end to his thickening difficulties. "Och, Molly, ye've been drinkin', that's plain, or ye would never spake like that."

A few sleepy grunts were the only answer he received, and after lifting her into a more comfortable position, he left the room, and was horrified to find, on returning to the place opposite, that the undertaker had arrived, made fast the screws which M'Sweeny had hastily driven home, and was now impatiently asking if they would proceed to the churchyard. A few words explained the drunken and helpless condition of the only person who had any say in the matter, and the nearest relative thereupon ordered the coffin to be borne downstairs. M'Sweeny followed with a palpitating heart and all his fun gone, faintly hoping that he might find me and the Secretary at the bottom of the stair, according to arrangement. It happened, however, that we were both late, and did not make up to the procession until it had entered the Canongate Burying-ground, where I was astonished to find M'Sweeny looking as pale as

death itself, and so alarmed as hardly to be able to gasp out the words at his tongue's end—

“By all the holy saints, Jamie, don't let them put that coffin in the ground!” he cried, with chattering teeth. “There's a livin' man in it! Begorra there is, for I heard him spake!”

While he was forcing the words out, the coffin was being lowered into the ground, and though no sound issued from it, the unwonted terror of my chum instantly roused me to action. In spite of the cries and threats of the mourners, I forced them to draw up the coffin and make the undertaker draw the screws. With a wrench and a tear I then pulled back the flap of the shroud and disclosed the white features of Dennis M'Carthy—not dead, but insensible and cold with the horrible terror he had endured by the threatened burial alive. For a time M'Sweeny was afraid that the fright had killed the man, and discreetly held his tongue regarding the hand he had had in the affair; but when M'Carthy at last was brought round, and said that “since his death he had felt as if he was in a trance like,” M'Sweeny grinned, and exchanged with him a knowing wink, the meaning of which I was only to learn long after. The papers were allowed to publish their account of a “Narrow Escape from Premature Burial” unquestioned; but I had my suspicions that, though the burial societies saved their money, M'Sweeny could have given us a case against Dennis, had he been only able to let his tongue wag without betraying his own indiscretion.

M'Carthy got an effectual fright, and never sought to go on a society's books again; and for a time when they met M'Sweeny, used to slyly exclaim, “Och, Dennis, my jewel, why did ye die?” but after Dennis removed to the far west, M'Sweeny took courage to tell me how the rogue chanced to be buried alive.

RUN TO EARTH.

WHILE M'Indoe and myself had been flying in the mail train miles upon miles from Edinburgh, The Ruffian was limping back in the direction he had come, not much the worse of the jump, but with all his evil passions roused against the man who had so often thwarted his best plans. Every article of value in his possession—with the exception of the knife stolen from Mr M'Gregor and the clothes he wore—was gone with that one wrench on the top of the train. He could not go near a single thieves' haunt without danger of being instantly pounced upon and delivered up; he did not dream of committing a robbery of any kind in broad daylight; and yet without money he could procure no shelter. What, then, was he to do? He slunk round the city debating the point, and finally settled it when he got in at the south side. Slipping into a pawnshop, he took off the overcoat he wore and offered it in pledge. The coat was a good one, and, after a deal of haggling, he at last got six shillings upon it, and left. Two hours after, the coat was picked up by one of our staff, identified at a glance, and removed, along with the assistant who had taken it in, to the Office. We had now certain knowledge that the man had returned to Edinburgh; but there, in spite of every vigilance and keen hunting, our knowledge for the present ended. Meanwhile The Ruffian had gone only round to Richmond Street; and, seeing a "Lodgings" ticket sticking out of a top flat suitable for his purpose, he went up and asked to see the room. The woman, a respectable hard-working widow, took him in without suspicion—a fact not surprising, seeing that he had now removed the old man's wig from his head, and strutted in Mr M'Gregor's best suit of superfine blacks. At a glance, the woman set him down as a Jew, and his first words seemed to confirm the opinion.

"I'm a traveller visiting Edinburgh on business for a few weeks; and I want a room, cheap, and with a good out-look."

He glanced stealthily at the room and its contents; but what

surprised the woman was that he appeared more anxious about the outside of it than any of the comforts within. He very deliberately opened the window, and scrutinized long and anxiously the cornice or ornamental ridge running along underneath the window to the roof of the next house, which happened to be a storey lower in height. Then, apparently satisfied, he came in, closed the window, and, after a long haggie, engaged the room at 5s. a-week, half of which he paid in advance, as a kind of security, he loftily remarked, "till his luggage should arrive." This done, he expended a shilling upon food, and then lay down and slept so soundly, from sheer exhaustion, till eight o'clock at night, that the landlady became alarmed and woke him. I mention these stern and pure facts, not only to put the real position of things before the reader, but to show that the "glorious ease" and vaunted "happiness" of great criminals are the most atrocious lie and deceptive myth that ever polluted this earth; and that they who paint criminal life otherwise are the most pernicious of romancers.

The Ruffian, though a good deal startled at the call, smiled grimly when the woman called him a "sound sleeper."

"I am a sound sleeper, as you may find before long," he impressively remarked. "Remember this, every night at ten o'clock I lock my room door and go to sleep; and on no account must I be roused before eight o'clock next morning. Will you remember?"

The woman stared, but gave the required promise, and afterwards remarked, when describing her new lodger to a green-grocer at the foot of the stair, that "Thae Jews, even when they're weel off, are the maist fyky folk I ever had to deal wi'"—a trifling remark in itself, but destined to lead to something in the hands of Simon Penbank.

Precisely at ten o'clock, after taking some supper, The Ruffian locked his room door; and shortly after, the light went out and all was still. But he was neither in bed nor asleep. He merely waited patiently till every one else was asleep in the house, and then softly opening his window, he got out on the stone ledge—scarcely six inches broad—and walked steadily and cautiously along to the roof of the next house. Nearly every window opposite was dark or blinded, and he imagined that his movements in the pitch darkness were unseen, but such was not the case. A sick, bed-ridden woman in a garret opposite saw nearly all his movements; but she neither wondered nor gave any alarm.

"It's only some students at their mad pranks," she said to herself. She had afterwards good reason to think otherwise.

Arrived at the roof of the next house, The Ruffian crossed the pinnacle to the other side, and felt carefully all over the hatch leading down to the stair. It was strongly fastened with an iron staple and padlock on the other side. He wrenched at it, prized at it, and sweated and cursed over it till he was black in the face, but in vain; the hatch would not yield. Convinced at last of this, he seated himself on the slates beside it, and very deliberately cut away the soft wood around the fastenings of the staple till only a thin shaving held the nails, which could thus be wrenched away at a moment's notice. This done, he gathered up every atom of a chip or shaving, pocketed them, and got back to his room once more by means of the ledge.

The only incident of importance which occurred next day was that he complained to the widow of feeling cold the night before, and asked the loan of some old clothes—some mole-skins which had belonged to her husband—to throw on top of the bed. Then at ten o'clock, as before, the widow heard him lock his room door; and shortly after she herself locked and barred the outer door of the house, removing the key, and placing it for safety under her own pillow, and was soon fast asleep.

About two hours after this—that is, close upon midnight—M'Indoe and I were standing at that part of the Potterrow where Middleton's Entry leads through to Bristo Street, conversing for a few moments before finally parting for the night. We had been on the hunt together during the whole day, and were not only thoroughly tired out, but beginning to despair of success as well. Of the two, however, I am constrained to admit M'Indoe was the more fearless and confident as to the issue; while as for danger to himself he positively scouted the idea.

"What harm can he do me?" he had carelessly remarked to me that very afternoon. "Kill me? What then? My life is of no value, and he would certainly be hung after it; so my debt would be paid off as effectively as if I myself had strangled him."

"Keep a sharp look out; that's the best advice I can give you. Remember his last words when he leaped from the train," I now said to him, as I shook hands for the last time before going through the entry towards my own home.

"I will, but he will know better than come near me," was his reply; and thus with a hearty good-night we parted—he going leisurely along the Potterrow in the direction of the Horse Wynd, and I striding through the entry towards Charles Street.

I had scarcely left his side three seconds when, by some unaccountable impulse, I ran back to the street to catch him if possible, and give him some direction as to next day's work which had escaped my memory. Looking along the dark and narrow street, I could just discern his figure and no more. He was passing a common stair, which, by some peculiarity in the building, jutted out on the pavement close to the gutter; and just as his coat-sleeve touched the open lintels in passing, I saw him stagger back as if he had been shot—right into the middle of the causeway—giving out a sudden scream of agony, and then throwing his arms wildly about before he dropped on the ground.

I ran like lightning, thinking that he had taken a fit, though it afterwards struck me that the stagger was more as if he had been suddenly pushed back from the stair-mouth by some one with a strong arm; and, as I did so, my eye, from resting on his stricken figure, was for a moment, and a moment only, attracted by what appeared to be the shadow of a man, attired in moleskins or some such light-coloured apparel, vanishing round the jutting stair into the darkness beyond. The glimpse was so transient, and the action so unlikely under the circumstances, that for an instant I put it down as a kind of ocular deception; but when I reached M'Indoe's side my eyes were opened.

"The Ruffian! The Ruffian!" he gurglingly gasped out, pressing his hand on his side, from which the dark blood was now welling in a hot stream. "I'm stabbed, and he has done it. Leave—me—get—him!" and with the last words, painfully groaned out, he fainted away in my arms.

I could not leave him, much as I wished to pursue his sudden and invisible assailant; but with desperate strength I managed to raise him in my arms, and run with him as far as College Street, whence a policeman helped me the remainder of the distance to the Infirmary. A hurried statement of this man while we were on the way to the Infirmary, coincided in a remarkable degree with my own ideas as to the dress of the assailant. Only a few seconds before I appeared, he had seen a man in moleskins dash round the corner from the Potterrow at an extraordinary speed, and vanish down Drummond Street

like a flying spectre. Leaving M·Indoe in the hands of the doctor and nurses—with the addition of Nosie as soon as he should arrive—I went straight to the houses of the principal men on the staff, and together we organised a plan for a systematic scouring of the whole city for the fugitive. I daresay, if we had been only allowed time, we would have come upon some traces of our quarry; but our plan was slow as well as sure, and before we were well begun, another was on the trail—one whose scent was to prove keener than all our own put together. That other was Simon Penbank.

It happened that my part in the hunt was to try to discover any one who had lent, sold, or in any way furnished another with a suit of moleskins; and though in the weary task I was anything but successful, the hunt at last brought one good thing about—a chance meeting with the seedy spy, at the door of a broker in the Pleasance.

“Have you heard the news?” I abruptly began, too concerned to notice that he wore an unusually elated and happy expression of countenance.

“I have not,” he replied with a bow. “The fact is, I have to-day been engaged in a new line—working—and behold! a shilling!” and he held out the silver coin triumphantly in his hand. “Start not, my dear Jamie, and do not trouble yourself to dilate those detective nostrils with that peculiar sniff; the coin is good, sterling, and my own, honestly earned. A friend of mine in the Cowgate has another friend who had some accounts to deliver; I delivered them, and behold—twelve pence!” and he displayed the solitary coin with more exultation and glee than I had before seen him show in exhibiting a sovereign won by treachery.

“What!” I exclaimed, so startled and incredulous, as to forget for the moment my immediate business. “Do you mean to tell me that any one was so insane as to trust you to draw money for them?”

“The accounts were not receipted,” was the smiling and undisturbed reply. “But in one case I was requested to sign it, and actually received the money.”

“And kept it, and drank it, I suppose?” I coolly remarked, fully expecting a gloating affirmative.

“Sir, you speak in ignorance, and I forgive you,” was the dignified rejoinder. “When last we met, my dear Jamie, I was a thief; now I am an honest man!”

“Indeed?” I sneered, grinning out into a laugh. “There is

one particular, at least, in which you stick to your old profession: you are a great liar."

"Wrong again; I am not lying, and I did not steal the money, but delivered it safely into the hands of my employer. Listen;" and with uncommon earnestness he proceeded to lay before me the details embodied in the last sketch.

I heard the story in silence and without comment, having little faith in any permanent change in such a hardened and well-seasoned rascal, and then suddenly remembered and repeated the question which I had put at first.

"I have heard nothing of M'Indoe or of any of the profession; I am now of another world, the world of honesty," was his grave reply.

"Then he's stabbed by The Ruffian, and lying at death's door almost," I abruptly returned. "I'm on the hunt for him now, and if diligence and patience can accomplish his capture, I mean to expend them freely."

"Good God!"

It was all he said, and he staggered back, as if for once really concerned about the misfortune of another.

"Stabbed, did you say?" he faintly exclaimed at last. "Who saw it? Where was it done? For Heaven's sake, tell me all about it."

His face, as I gradually disclosed the facts, as far as they were known to me, was a strange study. Slowly and surely it lighted up with a determination and flushed eagerness which I had never before seen among its pimples; and then when I had finished he grasped me tightly by the hand.

"If any detective powers possessed by me will land the murderous scoundrel in the salt box it shall be done!" he cried. "M'Indoe has been kind to me—more so than any human being—and I shall fight for him in return, though I should lose my own life in the struggle! There, that's more than I ever said before, and my life is of some value now, for I have some one to live for—namely, Steve Penbank, my adopted grandson. I have vowed to bring him up to honesty and a useful life, and I could not keep the oath if The Ruffian presented me with six inches of cold steel, which he would do as soon as look at me. Yes, all now depends upon him being run to earth."

These words came out in a hurried, excited gabble, quite unlike his usual dainty and perspicuous talk, which I could liken to nothing but a man stepping gingerly among eggs; and his enthusiasm unconsciously communicated itself to me. For

the first time in my life I shook the man's hand without a loathing shudder. One quick and emphatic statement of his rather staggered me.

"You have searched among thieves, fences, and brokers for some one who might have lent him the moleskins; you might have saved yourself the trouble. He might as well walk into the Office as go near any of them; the whole hue and cry is against him, and he knows it. Now, mark me, my opinion is, that he has got them from some *honest*, unsuspecting labourer. More: the stabbing was done in the Potterrow; he ran off by College Street and Drummond Street, *believing himself unseen*. Well, the pawnshop at which the overcoat was left and found, is only a street off from the same place, and he would naturally take the quickest cut for shelter. Take my advice: look for him somewhere about that street. You know how he deceived Mr M'Gregor; believe me, he has got nestled into some honest man's family, or some decent lodging-house, where they don't take in papers, and are not likely to suspect his real character. Why, it would be his only chance—between that and the bleak hills he would have no choice. Come now, let's take the streets together; go over them stair by stair, flat by flat, and meet every half-hour at a given point."

The proposal was so eagerly and confidently given, that though not at all convinced of the soundness of his deductions, I at once agreed, and we separated at the foot of Adam Street to our difficult task. It was now dusk, but that made little difference to us, as some of the stairs which we had to explore were nearly as dark by day as night. Nothing of importance turned up with either of us, till Simon Penbank turned into a green-grocer's in Richmond Street, where his stereotyped manoeuvres and cunning inquiries at last elicited something like a clue.

"A beautiful evening, ma'am," he sweetly began, bowing profoundly. "I will take a ha'p'orth of peppermint balls, if you please. I find them good for killing a crave for something stronger. Thank you, ma'am. Yes, it is a remarkably fine night—cold, but very clear for November. Moleskin clothes, I believe, are very good for keeping out the cold; do you not hear any of your numerous customers say so?"

"My customers are maistly women," laughingly returned the woman, "and there's nane o' them wears moleskins."

"True, true—ha, ha! A very good joke that of yours, Mrs Grocer," graciously returned Simon, with a look of great sim

plicity; "but their husbands—p'r'aps you have heard their opinion on the subject?"

"I dinna ken onybody that wears moleskins aboot here," said the woman, probably beginning to wonder at his persistence. "There was a consumptive auld mason at the tap o' the stair used to wear them, but he's deid."

"Ah, dead—em—that's unfortunate," said Penbank, gravely stroking his chin, as if the question at stake had been a serious one. "And I suppose, now, he hasn't got a successor?"

"What's that?" asked the woman, simply.

"Ha, ha! very good, Mrs Grocer," pleasantly laughed Penbank, in a way which made her think that she had said something witty. "You women folks have always the advantage of us poor men. By a successor I mean, of course, as you know, another man in the house."

"Houts! is that a'? Na, na; she'll never marry again. Man, she's an auld body that lives by keeping lodgers, and daein' a bit sewin' noo an' again. There's no a man in the hoose the noo but a daft Jew, that's ta'en her room for a week or twa."

"A WHAT!"

The words came out with a shout. Penbank had staggered back, white to the lips, and with every banter and smile driven in a flash from his cunning face. The woman was frightened at the sudden change, and gave a slight scream.

"A Jew, I said," she stammered out. "There's naething wrang in that, is there?"

"Nothing in the world, my dear madam, nothing in the world," hastily rejoined Simon, recovering himself in a moment. "You will excuse my start when I tell you the cause. I am in search of a dear friend—a Jew, quite a young man—to whom quite a considerable debt is owing, but who persistently refuses to accept of the same. Oh, happiness! if my dear friend is found at last! Excuse this emotion, ma'am—this excitement and haste; but, believe me, your information shall not go unrewarded. The stair, you said, was quite close at hand, did you not? I positively long to clasp him in these arms."

"Just at the door there—the tap flat," said the woman, beginning, I regret to say, to think Penbank an escaped lunatic, and not sorry to see him away. "Follow your nose up the stair, an' ye canna miss the door."

Simon needed no second telling. In one minute he stood panting on the top flat of the stair, applying a gentle knock to the door of the house in which The Ruffian at that moment lay

hidden. The door was opened by the widow herself, who was instantly drawn outside by the excited spy, who addressed her in a whisper.

"Excuse me, madam, but I believe you have a Jew lodging in this house. I am in search of a dear friend who has failed to forward me his address, and whom I hope to find identical with the gentleman in your room. Tell me, did he bring anything into the house with him—bundles, bags, luggage?"

"No a rag; his luggage is no come yet," was the astonished woman's reply.

"He hadn't, for instance, a suit of moleskins with him?"

"No."

"And you didn't lend him a suit to put on?"

"No."

The woman told a lie; but I am convinced that she did it unconsciously. At the moment, probably, she had quite forgotten the fact of lending her lodger the old things "to throw on top of his bed," and it was certainly true that she did not lend him them "to put on." The mistake was a natural one, but it nonplussed Penbank; though not nearly so much as her next answer, which completely staggered him.

"When did he come in last night?" he faintly asked.

"He never was oot a' day."

"Well, when did he go out at night?" impatiently pursued Penbank.

"He never was oot a' nicht; he went to bed at ten o'clock, after locking his door, as he aye does, and didna rise till eight this mornin'."

"You're sure of that?" Penbank's last hope was vanishing.

"Quite sure—I could swear it. I lockit the ooter door mysel' at half after ten, an' had the key alow my pilly a' nicht; so he couldna hae gaen oot unless he gaed through the key-hole."

Penbank was completely staggered, but he had so built himself up on the discovery and capture that he could not relinquish it without a struggle. He questioned the widow minutely; turned everything upside down and inside out; found out everything about her lodger—his appearance, the clothes he wore, and the exact amount of money he had been known to expend, and in all the facts tallied with those already in his possession; but the locked doors were a dead case of *alibi*; and very slowly and reluctantly Penbank was forced to give in, and retire. In a dreamy mechanical way, he got down the stairs, and into the

street once more, and then took a despairing glance up at the window ticketed—"Lodgings."

"Had the window been on the slates, I could have still believed this Jew and The Ruffian to be one; but from that window there is no escape, even for a monkey—not a solitary gutter or pipe to which he could have clung. But, stop; there's a ledge of stone under the window, broad enough for a foothold; standing on that, and blessed with a stronger nerve than I possess, one might easily walk the short distance to the adjoining roof, and that, if it has an open or unfastened hatch, would complete the means of exit. Let me explore the next stair; the hatch may confirm my suspicion."

The twilight was deepening rapidly, but there was still sufficient for his purpose; and, without a moment's delay, he turned into the next stair, and reached the top flat, where, by climbing up on the wooden railing, he raised himself to a level with the hatch, which he had no sooner glanced at—freshly cut away as it was with a knife, and the staple wrenched off and dangling loose—than he dropped down on the stair with an ill-suppressed whoop of delight.

"Blast him and his devilish cunning, I thought so!" he breathlessly exclaimed; "it is The Ruffian after all! He little thought that it was not the police alone, but Simon Penbank against whom he had pitted his wits. Now for a grand swoop; a royal pounce!"

He was down the stair with extraordinary swiftness, intending to look for me and then visit The Ruffian; but while he had been prying and investigating, another, the principal man concerned, had not been idle.

The Ruffian had heard the subdued whispering at the door, had sniffed danger in a moment, and as soon as possible after the closing of the outer door had sauntered carelessly into the widow's kitchen and gleaned an outline of the facts. Then his frightful oaths and convulsed face almost drove the poor woman into fits, and before she knew where she was he was out of the house and down the stair. Thus it was that, just as Penbank descended the last of the stairs, and was about to walk out of the next entry, he saw a form and face flash past its mouth, which, uncertain as was the mingled light of gloaming and street lamps, he instantly recognised as that of The Ruffian. Right out south the hunted criminal glided, at a pace which almost took the breath out of the spy gliding in his wake, through Richmond Street and St Leonard's towards the Queen's Park.

Penbank groaned as he saw the direction, but brightened a little as he came in sight of St Leonard's Police Station, with the Inspector standing bareheaded at the door.

"M'Govan's about Richmond Street somewhere," hastily panted out the spy, pausing in his run. "Get him at once. I'm after The Ruffian, who stabbed M'Indoe last night, and he's gone down towards the Queen's Park. Send as many men down after me as you can get, and telegraph at once to the Head Office—quick!" and he was off almost before the old man had drawn a breath.

Down at the Park he again caught sight of the gliding shadow of the hunted man cutting along St Leonard's Hill, and past the "Echoing Stane" towards Hunter's Bog. At the top of the slope running down to the Bog itself he lost the figure, but luckily stumbled suddenly on one of the Park rangers.

"Cut along the face of Arthur's Seat by that path and intercept, if possible, a man—a Jew—flying towards the Whinny Hill!" he shouted. "The police are after him. If you meet any one, send them to the gates with word to stop all suspicious characters, and directions to the police where to find me."

The ranger ran right along under Arthur's Seat, and Penbank without hesitation plunged down towards the dreary valley. There he found him poking about among the spring-wells, whins, and rocky corners, and the shout of joy which he gave out when the great-coated forms and shining hats of the swarm of policemen burst upon his view was something to be remembered.

It was quite dark now, but the moon was gathering strength; and as another party headed by M'Sweeny were entering the valley by the other end, the chances of the fugitive escaping were becoming fewer and fewer, if, as Penbank insisted, he really had not left the valley, having been intercepted and chased back at the other end by two of the rangers.

"I saw him about here," said the excited spy, poking anxiously about in the ditch, about a foot wide, which drained the valley from end to end. "I'm certain it was he; but the moment I sighted him a great stone caught my feet and took me down on my face, and in that brief moment he vanished."

"Spread the men out on every side, and let the ditch be raked from end to end," I quickly ordered; and the thing was scarcely done and the ditch raked by Penbank and myself for some twenty yards, when The Ruffian rose, dripping and muddy, from among the rushes and dashed straight up the brae—the only unguarded point—in the direction of the disused quarry

behind Salisbury Craigs. The shout echoing out behind him he answered with a snarl like that of a hunted wolf ; but instead of flying down into the quarry, as I had expected, he cut round it and took a slant towards the edge of the Craigs. Almost to the last—when only half-way up the hill—I could see his figure clear against the sky ; but when I had reached the top of the hill—within fifty feet of the flying man—with the park rangers and policemen swarming up on every side, he vanished !

Yes, how he went, or whither, I could not for the life of me guess ; but he disappeared like a ghost among moonlight. We backed, halted, surrounded the spot on every side, searched it minutely all over, but could find not a trace of The Ruffian or the means he had used to elude us. At last some one said—

“ P'raps he stumbled and fell over the rocks, and may now be lying smashed into atoms down on the Radical Road ? ”

I thought the thing unlikely, but instantly sent a party round to explore ; but in an hour they returned with the news that not a trace of him, living or dead, was to be found from one end of the road to the other. Still unsatisfied, I got lights and made the round myself, and then the whole mystery was revealed. Not on the path, but on a ledge of the precipice about seven feet above it, a ghastly white face hung backwards over the rock, with dangling hair and features even in death convulsed like those of a mangled tiger ; and in the face I at once recognised that of the hunted man. He had stumbled in cutting along too near the edge of the precipice, and gone over head foremost, plump down on the ledge, where with a fractured skull and broken neck all that remained of him now lay, a thing to shiver and shudder at, and to haunt the memory for years.

The body was removed in the course of the night ; and in the morning I myself took the news in to M'Indoe, in the infirmary. To my surprise he clasped his hands, burst into tears, and said—

“ I can die now—peacefully—happily.”

But he was not yet to die. Nosie Mincher and the nurses, and the doctor, and his own wonderfully tough system, pulled him steadily through ; and in a few weeks he was again walking like a grey shadow through the streets. There for the present I shall leave him, and say a last word about Simon Penbank.

The acumen, penetration, and skill shown by him in this last affair called from my lips the suggestion that he would make a capital detective. The hint was instantly leaped at, but I at once damped his ardour by coolly adding—

“ Of course in Edinburgh, or even in England, such a thing

is out of the question ; no one would trust you for a moment in such an onerous position. But in America : there's the field for your genius. New York abounds in rogues even greater than yourself, and as the authorities are not over scrupulous, you can easily get on to the staff with very few recommendations from this side of the water. Once in office, I'll back you to stand your ground against any one."

"But you, my dear Jamie," interposed the subtle flatterer, with a smile—"against any one but you. However, I shall give your suggestion my gravest consideration."

The hint was eventually acted upon ; and the spring found Simon Penbank, with his "grandson" Steve Penbank, on board a clipper of the Black Ball Line, bound for New York. I wish I had room to detail his various successes in the land of his adoption : how he rose steadily ; was transplanted to Louisville, became lieutenant of police, and finally rose to the magistracy itself ; but time and space forbid. With his gracious bow and grand air, his smirking smile and sublime dignity, he now passes from my sketches, and will be heard of no more ; but I can never think of his remarkable reformation and the apparently simple means by which it was effected, without remembering the words—

"A LITTLE CHILD SHALL LEAD THEM."

A SACRED TRUST.

ONE Saturday night, after the conclusion of the Musselburgh Races, Tom Calder, a young lad of eighteen, slowly wandered up from the Portobello Road, and through the Queen's Park, towards the foot of the Canongate. Hundreds had passed him on the way, walking, or riding in droskeys, cabs, or omnibuses, uproarious with mirth and jollity; but there was not the faintest echo of feelings in the breast of Tom Calder. His mind was filled with the keenest remorse, and the most hopeless despondency. Neither his intelligence nor his morals were of a very high type; he drank a little, swore a little, and smoked and strutted after the most approved fashion, trying to forget that he was a draper's apprentice, and to imagine himself a gentleman; but still, up to that day, he had been honest. One little temptation, very simply yielded to, had done it all. He had been sent home with an order to Portobello; had unexpectedly received the money for it; had then thoughtlessly wandered along to Musselburgh Links—had risked a shilling on a wheel of fortune, saying to himself that he could easily replace it when he reached his lodging, and had lost it; and then wildly staking shilling after shilling, and pound after pound, he had at last found himself madly flying the spot, with all the money gone, and a devil shouting in his ears that he was ruined.

"Six pounds fifteen," he hoarsely muttered to himself, as he dragged his weighted footsteps past Holyrood Palace. "Where on earth am I to get it? I'm afraid I'm done at last, and will be put into prison like a common thief, with my character gone for ever. Jenny can't help me this time; I know she can't, for I got her last pound on Monday to pay for this coat. She's a good sister, and no mistake, and would do anything for me, all because mother wrote two or three words on the fly-leaf of her Bible before she died; but I can't get from her what she hasn't got. Curses on it! why did I ever go near the races?"

He stamped his foot, ground his teeth, and felt savage

enough at that moment to have cut his own throat ; but to his last question there came no answer—a circumstance not very surprising, seeing how often it has been asked by others with a like result.

“ I’m afraid it has come to a smash up ; I will have to leave Edinburgh,” he gloomily muttered ; “ but before I take the road, I had better write a line to Mr Chisholm, telling him the truth, and entreating him not to send the police after me.”

Thus resolved, he turned into a public-house at the foot of the Canongate, hunted out a stray copper or two from his pocket, and ordered a glass of beer ; then, seeking the most retired box in the place, he took out his sale-book, and began in a groaning way to write as follows :—

“ Dear Sir,—I send this to tell you that I was foolishly tempted to go along to Musselburgh Races on Saturday, after delivering the order and receiving the money. I lost all the money at a wheel-of-fortune before I knew what I was doing, and have left the city. Oh, Sir, if you will only be good enough not to send the police after me, and will take this note to my sister Jenny, I am sure she will pay you back every penny I have taken, though she should have to work her fingers to the bone to do it.—Yours in great distress,

“ THOS. CALDER.”

This note, written in a bold, round hand, with many a groan and subdued curse at his own folly, was at last held up to the light by Tom Calder, who was quite unconscious that its legible characters were being scanned and read by any eyes but his own. While he had been writing, a head had risen noiselessly above the partition separating him from the adjoining box, and there a pair of bright eyes had remained till the whole was finished ; and then, just as the note was folded up, a hand came down with lightning speed and swooped it up into the air. With a startled cry the lad staggered round, only to see a giant-like ruffian coolly folding his great arms above the partition, after carefully pocketing the tell-tale note.

The stranger was Rory M’Knight, a far greater villain than he looked, the keeper of a shebeen in Lochend’s Close, but by no means dependent upon that alone for subsistence.

“ What did you do that for ?” boldly demanded the youth, thinking that the man was drunk.

“ Come round here and I’ll tell ye,” cautiously replied the ruffian, with an ingratiating smile. “ The main thing was to prevent ye from makin’ a fool of yourself.”

“ Are you a detective ?” asked the quaking youth.

“ No ;” and the other grinned as he made the answer.

"It's small mercy ye'd get from them. But come round—I want to talk to ye, and for yer own good."

"Suppose I refuse?"

"Well, refuse away!" replied Rory, with the shadow of a scowl crossing his face; "*I've got yer letter all the same.*"

The meaning look which accompanied the words so peculiarly emphasised could not be mistaken, and the lad stumbled quickly into the next box, where the two surveyed each other for some moments in silence. The thief pushed his mug of beer across the table, but the young draper turned away with a shudder. He was in no mood for drinking—had left his own glass untouched in the next box.

"You've got into a mess?" remarked the thief, in what appeared to Tom a remarkably kind tone.

"I have, through my own folly, but I don't see what you have got to do with that."

"You're a fool, but I won't get angry," said the thief. "How much have ye boned? Tell me all about it, till I see if I can help ye."

The request was simple, and the man appeared to be kindly disposed; and, while the thief puffed away at a black cutty pipe, Tom unguardedly told him all.

"Then the cove paid the things without getting a receipt?" remarked Rory, after he had heard all and remained silent for a moment or two.

"Yes; but I promised to send him down one on Monday," was the simple reply.

"Then he was more the fool," quickly returned the unscrupulous. "Take my advice, and say nothing about getting the money; he'll p'raps forget all about the receipt, and then nobody'll be a bit the wiser—that is, *nobody but me.*"

"But the account would certainly be sent to him at Christmas," demurred Tom.

"Ah, that's a long way off. Do as I tell you; and if it fails, why, come down to Rory M'Knight, Lochend's Close, and I won't see ye stuck for money."

A burst of thanks followed the apparently generous offer; for Tom Calder's was one of those easy-going, selfish natures which do not scrutinise ways and means closely, as long as their own comfort is not disturbed; and it was with some hesitation that he at last suggested the restoration of the note which he had written.

"Yes, ye're right—it had best be destroyed," remarked the

cunning thief, without, however, offering to produce the paper or perform the office.

"Then hand it over, and I'll tear it up," joyfully and unsuspectingly returned the younger culprit.

"Well, no ; on second thoughts, I'll keep it as security for the return of the money I'm going to lend you."

"But I haven't got the money yet," very truly remarked Tom.

"No, but you will, the moment it's needed," said Rory, who was a liar of the first water. "I like confidence for confidence, ye see."

"And what am I to do in return for your kindness?" simply inquired the youth, a little ashamed of his distrust.

"Ah, as to that I am not particular. I may ask a favour of you some day in return, and I may not—just as it happens;" and then he filled up a glass of beer for his new acquaintance, and the conversation merged into other topics, which interested them so deeply, and took so long to discuss, that when Tom rose to go home he found his head anything but clear, and his legs far from steady under him.

On Sabbath morning the guilty youth woke with a start to his shame and disgrace ; but the evil counsel of the thief had now become fixed in his mind, and he resolved to follow it to the letter, quite unconscious of the noose he was thereby tightening round his own neck. Accordingly, when he appeared at business on Monday morning, he made no mention of the payment received ; the order was allowed to remain as a debt in the day-book ; and in a few days he himself had almost succeeded in shutting out the disagreeable incident from his mind. He did not attempt to seek out his new friend, Mr Rory M'Knight, for the simple reason that, on reflection, he had decided to see that gentleman no more. In strict truth, he cursed himself heartily for entrusting his secret to a stranger, and resolved to save money by every means in his power, so that when he was sent round with the accounts at Christmas he could pay the six pounds fifteen, and no one ever be the wiser.

But, alas ! he reckoned entirely from his own side, and, like thousands before and since, was doomed to a woeful disappointment. Just as he was putting up the shutters of Mr Chisholm's shop, about a fortnight after the races, a tall and bulky form brushed up to him, with the familiar salutation, "Well, Tom, how d'ye do?" and then, looking round, he recognised with extreme disgust his kind friend Rory.

"Walk on, and don't speak to me just now," whispered the guilty lad, in a hushed tone, looking round with some trepidation; "I will join you at the corner of the Tron in a minute."

Rory whistled aloud, but obeyed with a grin, and in about three minutes was joined by the panting youth.

"You didn't come to see me," began the thief, in a half-reproachful tone; "so after waitin' and waitin'. I thought I'd come up to you—more especially as I was in need of a trifle of money, which I've no doubt ye'll let me have as a favour till to-morrow."

Tom's heart sank within him. For the first time he realised his helpless position by noting the arrogant and commanding tone in which the request was made.

"I have very little—only about five shillings," he piteously made answer, "and that I've saved only by half-starving myself; I meant it to pay off that six pounds fifteen at Christmas."

"That's all I want; the five will do quite well," coolly returned the thief. "Don't bother yourself about the account. When it comes due, just come down to me and I'll lend ye the money."

There was a long pause, during which Tom scrutinised the face of the thief long and anxiously.

"If I give you the five shillings, will you give me up that paper?" he huskily asked at last.

"It would do ye no good," promptly returned Rory. "Ye think that it would put ye out of my power. Think again, and ye'll see that I've only to walk into the shop and tell your master, and ye're done."

"And would you do it?" despairingly breathed the lad.

"Do it? I'd do anything to make money. I'm not particular; I told ye so before."

The lad groaned, but saw that he was helpless, and at last produced his purse and tendered the two half-crowns, which were clutched at without thanks; and then without another word the two parted.

And their acquaintance did not end there, though it would have been good for both if it had. Rory came back with a fresh demand every week; and sometimes by working upon the goodness of his sister Jenny—a hardworking domestic servant at Morningside—Tom could manage to satisfy them; but the time speedily arrived when even that source of income was

exhausted. Then at last came the vile proposal which Tom had seen dimly looming up in the future from the beginning of their acquaintance—theft from his master's shop. It was yielded to, first with many misgivings and qualms, then more recklessly and eagerly as his own wants increased, and he found Rory willing to pay in small dribblets for the stolen goods. At last, just before Christmas, when he knew that his power over Tom would be lost if the discovery were not averted by the account being taken up and paid, Rory got impatient for a large haul; and, after getting from the guilty lad a careful plan of the premises, as well as a cast in wax of two of the keys, he tried the place from the back, and was only scared away and frustrated by the accidental presence of Mr Chisholm himself on the premises. Rory got off scot free, but somehow suspicion had gathered about Tom Calder. The master had a long talk with me; I was empowered to search the apprentice's lodgings; a few articles undoubtedly stolen were there secured, and Tom himself was compelled to walk with me all the way to the Police Office, with his wrist fastened to my own, and a gabbling crowd flying at his heels—a position and degradation which he seemed to feel most acutely.

Next morning he was brought up at the Police Court, and as his master pressed only for a conviction for the few articles recovered, he wisely pleaded guilty, and got off with thirty days' imprisonment. Just as he was leaving the Court his eye fell on a young woman weeping silently among the audience, and then for the first time a look of grief convulsed his face.

"Oh, Jenny!" he cried, bringing his hands together in a wild clasp. "You here!"

"Yes, Tom. I couldn't stay away when you were in trouble. Keep up a good heart," she cried, hastily wiping away her tears and trying to smile. "I know you didn't mean to be a thief; and I'll be waiting for you outside the gaol when you come out. Mother asked me to look after you, and I'll do it till one of us is dead!"

He was hurried away down to the lock-up at the same moment, and the Court being over, his sister slowly moved out with the audience to the open air. Feeling a sudden interest in her, I tapped her on the arm just as she was turning away from the entrance.

"You are his sister Jenny, I suppose?" I said. "Would you like to know what led him astray?"

"Yes, indeed, sir," was the eager reply. "I know he is not

very bad ; he is only simple, and easily led away. Mother always said so to me ; and when she died—I was far away at the time—she wrote on her Bible, ‘ Oh, Jenny, look after poor Tom.’ That was all she got written when the pen fell out of her hand.”

“ It is a sacred trust,” I said, thrilled by her simple eloquence. “ Now, Jenny, if you wish to fulfil it, keep him out of bad company. That is what has ruined him. Above all, when he comes out, keep him away from a tall scoundrel called Rory M’Knight, who carries enough cunning and wickedness within his skin to corrupt a nation.”

“ I will not forget, sir,” she earnestly replied. “ But, oh, sir, couldn’t you, who are a detective and a strong man, take and catch this scoundrel and have him imprisoned ?”

“ I wish I got the chance,” I quickly returned. “ I shouldn’t be slow to take it.”

“ Nor I,” she suddenly added, with a flashing of the eye which quite changed for the moment the commonplace expression of her face ; “ I would hold on to him, though he hacked me to pieces.”

“ Remember it will be a hard struggle when your brother comes out again to keep him straight. The stain will be on his character, and people will be chary about employing him ;” and with this warning I offered her my hand, which she shook warmly.

“ I don’t care what I may have to suffer, so that I keep him right,” she said quietly. “ I will look after him. Good-bye.”

Thus we parted ; but though she was true to her promise, and was waiting outside the gaol at the end of her brother’s term to receive him, his was not the nature to appreciate real nobility of soul and purpose ; and her arrangements for his good were rather coldly received. The fact is, that within two yards of where they stood was Rory M’Knight, quietly waiting to greet his pupil ; and, strange though it may appear, the anxious and tearful girl was actually shoved aside in favour of the bulky scoundrel, whom she hated from the bottom of her soul at a first glance. Rory and Tom had a long talk in whispers by themselves, and then, having completed their arrangements, they parted, and Tom consented to accompany his sister to the lodging which she had thoughtfully provided. The end of the struggle thus inauspiciously begun may easily be imagined. Tom did not get work, did not show himself particularly anxious to look for it, or over careful of the money which his sister had

saved, scraped, and borrowed by every means in her power ; and at last, when he had drained her dry, he deserted her altogether, and became a professional thief. This fact was well known to me ; but poor Jenny still hoped against hope, and though she never once caught sight of him for nearly a year, she firmly believed that he would turn up again all right.

One day in summer, in passing a fine self-contained house at Morningside I heard myself called by name from behind, and looking round saw a servant lass running out, whom I soon recognised as Jenny. Her first word, of course, was of her brother ; indeed, I read it in her glistening eyes before ever her lips were opened.

“ Oh, sir, if you should see him—no matter where he is or how poorly he’s dressed—would you tell him that Jenny’s never changed towards him ? ” and, as she spoke, she brought out a little shabby purse, with the idea, I believe, of shoving a half-crown into my hand.

“ Thank you—no—that is not necessary,” I said, moved in spite of myself at her fixed devotion, and gently shoving back her hand.

“ Oh, would you tell him that I’ll receive him with open arms and press him close to my heart, just as if nothing had ever happened ? ” she cried, now sobbing unconstrainedly, and impulsively grasping my hand in both her own. “ Tell him to remember the words which are written inside mother’s Bible, and that I kiss them every night on my knees when I say my prayers——” And then her utterance became choked ; and, hastily wringing my hand, she disappeared into the house as suddenly as she had come.

But, though I was thus made the bearer of a message, it happened that the opportunity never turned up for delivering it. Tom Calder did his best to keep out of my sight, and for the time succeeded.

About a month after this meeting, when the whole establishment at Morningside were gone off to the seaside, leaving Jenny alone in charge of the place, she was one day startled to observe three very suspicious-looking characters passing and re-passing in front of the house. At first she had paid no attention to their prying movements ; but presently something in the bulky form of one of them struck her as familiar, and, shading her eyes from the sun with her hand, just as he was passing for the third or fourth time, she recognised with a thrill of hope Rory M’Knight ! All her dread and alarm were gone in a moment.

"Perhaps he has a message to me from Tom, and wishes me to go out and get it," she said to herself, hastily drying her hands and throwing on a cap. "I will run out and see."

Out she ran, and patiently waited till he turned and saw her; but, far from availing himself of the opportunity and addressing her, the moment he saw her staring in his direction, Rory prudently turned on his heel and disappeared, at a pace which was almost swift enough for a run.

"It's very strange; perhaps I should have gone out sooner," she simply and unsuspiciously said to herself, as she re-entered the house. "Poor Tom! Perhaps he is ill. Oh, how I wish that that man had stopped a moment and said only one word to ease my mind!" and then she sat down and had a good cry.

About dusk the same evening, a shrinking figure, very shabby and very disreputable-looking, appeared in front of the house, and with a scream of joy Jenny, who was sharply on the lookout, recognised her long-lost brother! She was out of the house in a moment, and had him in her arms before she knew what she was about; and then the two entered the kitchen and sat down, he showing manifest reluctance and uneasiness, and an impatience to be gone which surprised her.

"I have come at a great risk," he abruptly said at last. "I want you to promise to go to the theatre, or somewhere to-morrow night. There, don't look scared; you shall come to no harm, for I shall take you there and back myself."

"I daren't go. Oh, Tom, how can you ask me? I dare not leave the house; it is left in my charge."

"I tell you you shall go," he angrily persisted. "Are you ashamed of me now, because I am so badly dressed and shunned as a ——"

"Stop, stop, Tom!" she cried, almost in a scream, with every drop of blood gone from her face, as she placed her hand on his mouth. "Don't say that terrible word. See!" and she took down a pocket Bible from one of the shelves, and opened it at the fly-leaf. "That's what mother wrote before she died. 'Oh, Jenny, look after Tom.' Can I ever forget it? No, I shall never, never be ashamed of you, Tom."

He softened a little, and averted his head at the sight of the book.

"Put that thing away," he rather huskily returned, "and listen to me. You mustn't be in this house to-morrow night; it's for your own safety, and at the risk of my own life, that I have come to warn you."

"Is the place to be robbed?" she cried, in a startled whisper, jumping straight at the truth, which he was shuffling to hide.

"I dare not say," was his agitated reply. "Oh, Jenny, you do not know the danger you are drawing down on my head by asking."

"I will not draw down danger on you; I will die sooner," she fearfully whispered. "Tell me all; are you to be one—one of them?"

"No, no," he cried, with the first trace of his old impulsiveness; "I would sooner cut my own throat than rob a friend of yours. But *they* mean to try it; and one of them, Rory, is a devil when his passion's up, and strong enough to overturn a horse. He might kill you, as he will me, if you betray what I have revealed."

Jenny sat and stared at him in stony silence through the deepening twilight.

"Oh God! I wish you had never come," she at last got out, in a wail of anguish.

"Do you mean to betray me?"

"Never, never!"

"Then don't be in the house, that's all I have to advise," he said, and then he left her to her trouble.

What ought she to do?—that was the question which racked her mind and chased sleep from her eyes the long night through. She could not telegraph to her master, for he would at once inform the police, who would secure the thieves, and thus bring down on her brother their sure vengeance. Then she could not herself call in assistance, for the same result would follow. Once only did a glimmering idea of seeking me out and trusting the whole to me enter her head; but though she dressed herself for the walk, she did not get a step beyond the door. Thus the day passed away, and she was still undecided as to her proper course. One thing, however, she did resolve most determinedly—she would not quit her post; no, not for all the giants and Rorys that ever walked in shoe leather. Night came, and she calmly locked every door, as was her wont, took down her Bible, said her prayers, and went to bed, not to sleep, but lie and listen. In about two hours there was a scraping and rasping sound at one of the back doors, and she started up, hurried on her things, and taking the kitchen poker in one hand, and a candle in the other, she softly walked into the lobby and demanded, "Who

was there?" The only answer was the sudden crashing in of the back door, and the next moment three men were in, the candle was dashed from her hand, and the poker, which she had swung down with terrific force on one of their arms, was wrenched from her and swung high over her head.

"Will ye give in quietly, and show us where the swag is, or shall I croak ye?" cried Rory, whose voice she instantly recognised through the darkness.

"I will give in; I will show you everything!" cried Jenny, in an eager tone, which the ruffian mistook for one of terror. A sudden thought had flashed upon her with his words, and she had swiftly resolved to try to trap all three.

"You must come down to the cellar where the wine is," she said, as soon as she had been permitted to rise.

"Very good; by all means let's get near where the wine is," said Rory; "but, as there is a risk of treachery, just you two go along with her whilst I watch up here."

Jenny's heart died within her; but putting a bold face on the disappointment, she led the way to the kitchen, where she pointed to a heavy wooden trap in the floor.

"Perhaps one of you would lift it, it's so heavy," she suggested, and one of them gallantly hastened to oblige her. The heavy trap was raised on its hinges, and a dark lantern shone down into the abyss.

"See anything?" briefly inquired the second thief.

"Blest if I do—nothing but coals," was the suspicious reply.

"You'll have to go further down before you see anything," said the brave girl, with a palpitating heart.

The first took the hint, and went further down—nearly to the foot of the ladder in fact; and then the other—he whose arm had felt the weight of the poker—followed, peering about anxiously.

"I say you, what was it we was to see?" cried the first, looking up after a fruitless search.

"This!" she sharply returned, and with a mighty swing and a heavy thud she had the trap swung down, shutting them in securely, and then drawing open the heavy kitchen door over the trap, thus locking them in. Scarcely was the thing done when their shout rang through the air, and was answered by Rory from the other end of the house. With a rush he was into the lobby, and caught in his arms the figure of the flying girl.

"You treacherous she-tiger! what do you mean?" he hissed in her ear, almost strangling her as he spoke, with scarcely an effort of his strong hands.

"I mean to land you in prison," she gurgled out; and then in the moment's release from his fingers she emitted a pealing scream for help which was heard far and near.

"Be quiet—curses on ye! If you value your own life, shut up!" he hoarsely breathed, tightening his grasp at her throat, and vainly trying to shake her off in a desperate struggle.

But her life was just the thing which Jenny did not now value. She felt him dash her about—down on the floor—against the wall—with his hands, knees, and cruel feet even. But though the blood streamed from her, and her breath was nearly gone, she held on like grim death, till in a dim, hazy way she saw a great glare of lights, a crowd of faces, two policemen grasping Rory and putting handcuffs on his wrists, and then she gasped out, with a faint smile—

"It was a' for Tom that I did it," and fainted clean away.

It took long and careful nursing to bring her round; but she got well at last, and almost her first outing was a drive to the High Court of Justiciary, where she appeared as a witness, along with Tom, against Rory M'Knight. Then the whole history of Tom's wrong-doing was revealed from its beginning, as he frankly detailed his connection with the thief. Then after Rory had been sentenced to ten, and his companions to seven years' penal servitude, she turned to me with a smile and whispered—

"You see, sir, I always said that Tom wasn't really bad; it was that scoundrel who forced him to it."

Jenny and Tom started for Queensland together shortly after, her last words to me when she came to bid me good-bye being—

"Mother asked me to look after him, and I mean to do it, till one of us is dead."

LOADED WITH A LEGACY

DICKIE DODS, under-clerk in a brewery, and aged twenty-four years, strode the ragged carpet in his den of a lodging in Lothian Street, indignant, angry, but powerless. The lodging was cheap, he admitted that, but not too cheap, seeing that it was in the sunk flat facing a dead wall, and rather damp. What he objected to was being badgered and baited about a paltry sum which he did not at the moment happen to possess. Perhaps, writing formally about him, I should have called him Mr Richard Dods; but there are some in this world who never get rid of their boyhood's name. For forty years the iron has entered and remained in my own soul at being called Jamie, but protest I have long since given up as worse than useless.

Dickie, then, thrust his hands into his trousers'-pockets—deep down into the abyss of nothingness—and strode the three feet six of darned carpet fierce and fiery enough to have headed a rebellion or led an attack on the solid walls of the Bank of England.

“Three and sevenpence ha’penny—she said three and sevenpence ha’penny!” he groaned out from between his teeth; “and for that miserable pittance—that wretched and insignificant trifle—I must find another lodging and leave my box behind as a pledge of good faith—a pledge of good ten thousand curses! Oh, Mrs Trotter, you’re a widow, but I cannot help my feelings; I must curse you, though not a blade of grass should grow on your grave in consequence.”

This was very pathetic, no doubt, but it did not put a farthing in his pocket; and he turned to the wretched scrawl which had been left on the table, in faint hope that he might detect some glaring error of figures.

“Let me see. ‘Standing over—two and ninepence ha’penny.’ I believe that is correct,” he groaned; “I am not sufficiently calm to dispute that item. Then—what’s this? ‘One Heron, a ha’penny. I protest I never had a Heron—never saw one in my life, except once in a wild-beast show,

where they showed me a mangy pelican under that name. I'll pass that. Next 'Mutches, a ha'penny.' Mutches? Good heavens! a man never wears mutches—it's a cool robbery. Come in!"

A head, grimy as that of a sweep, and stuck all over with hard bullets of curl-papers, came in at the request; but the head did not belong to Mrs Trotter, the landlady, but to her "slavey," Jemima Springett. Jemima had a way of her own in everything, and, indeed, might have been taken for a boy had she only worn trousers; and she could not think of wasting her knuckles in rapping at doors when the hard head of the sweeping brush did as well.

"A letter for you, Dickie," she said bluntly, holding out a blue envelope fresh from the postman with her sooty paw.

"'Tisn't for me, Jem," said Dickie, deep in the account in his hand. "Pass it on to the next lodger. I've no friends, so I get no letters—no friends but you, Jem, that is. All the world are cannibals, but you are only dirty."

"Well, where's the use o' washin' a body till a body's work's done?" protested Jem, scratching one leg with the other foot.

"And your work, I believe, is never done?" mildly suggested Dickie.

"That's about it," said Jem, with emphasis. "Old Trotter, there, ain't up to much—'cept to sit and horder. She's good at that, but I've got to do all the dirty work—hunt for tick in the shops and bully the lodgers as won't pay. But I won't bully you, Dickie."

"No; you're a good boy, Jem—that is, I mean girl—and I shan't forget you when I'm gone——"

"Bah! never mind old Trotter," consolingly observed Jem, "but take the letter—oh, it's for you, an' no mistake—Mr Richard Dods—see!"

"Ah, well—put it down! I'm busy with an account just now," said Dickie, with some abstraction. "An account which I can't get to agree—with the sum in my pocket," he added, as the slavey disappeared.

By and by, however, Dickie became curious to know who could possibly have thought him worth a penny stamp; and he walked over to where the letter had been left by Jem, and scanned the post-mark and writing curiously. It was a neat hand, but not a commercial one—he saw that at a glance—more like that used in engrossing deeds; and after torturing himself with vain conjectures as to who in Edinburgh could

possibly be the writer, he opened the envelope and read as follows :—

“SIR—I have pleasure in informing you that by the will of Mr Robert Dods, half-cousin on your mother’s side, and now deceased, you are legatee to the sum of eight hundred pounds sterling (£800), free of all charges. The legacy will be paid over to you by me at this place any lawful day following the receipt of this note, between the hours of ten and three.

Congratulating you upon your good fortune, I am, your obt. servt.,—

JNO. CHISHOLM.

“Mr Richard Dods, Edin.”

A neat lithographed heading to this note told him that the joyful intimation came from the Queen Street Chambers of a lawyer well known for integrity and ability, and far above suspicion of any kind.

“Good gracious ! eight hundred pounds ! why, that’s a fortune !” gasped Dickie, paling to the roots of the hair, and sinking into a chair as if about to faint like a girl. “Eight hundred pounds to me, who have not eight pence—in fact, I’m actually in debt. By jingo ! I can pay off Mrs Trotter now. Hi ! hi ! Here, Mrs Trotter, here !” he shouted, banging open the door with a noise which brought the fat widow in alarm to the spot. “I have got a legacy of eight hundred pounds—see, there’s the letter—read it to her, Jem, if her specs are not handy, and I shall pay you that miserable account to-morrow—do you hear ?—to-morrow.”

The landlady stared and gaped, while Jem delightedly perched on a stool and read the letter aloud ; and then Mrs Trotter looked up in Dickie’s face with all her tyranny gone, and a sweet smile beaming out of her fond eyes.

“Aweel, I’m sure—that is, Maister Dods, sir—I’m in nae hurry for the money,” she humbly replied. “’Deed, I’m no sure that ye’re awin’ me onything. I’ll hae to look up my papers an’ see, though I wudna wonder but they’re lost, so it doesna matter muckle. I’m rael gled to hear o’ yer gude fortune, and I hope ye’ll keep on the room just as usual. And ye maun come ben to tea aside me the morn’s nicht, sir, if ye wadna be owre prood—I like aye to mak’ my lodgers feel as if they were in their ain hame.”

Here Jem, with a great sputter on to her hand, burst into a horse laugh, and ducked her head just in time to escape her mistress’s heavy hand.

“Ho, ho, ho ! d’ye hear that now, Dickie ?” she shouted. “You’re not to get lagged for the three bob now, and you’re to come to tea—ho, ho, ho !”

"Oh, that deevil o' lassie!" and with another lounge in the direction of Jem's head, the fat widow staggered off, chasing her wildly.

But, left to himself with the wonderful letter, Dickie's head fairly ran round. He did not know what to do with such a sum, and was no sooner assured of its possession than he began to speculate upon the possibility of losing it. If the lawyer should run off, or become bankrupt, or be robbed before morning, what would become of Dickie's fortune? Quite sick with thought and conjecture, Dickie at last put his head out at the door and summoned his only friend, Jem. She came readily enough, as, indeed, she had always done, even when he had not a penny, and she saw with concern that he was still as excited and agitated as before.

"I say, Jem, this is an awful affair," he faintly began. "Sit down and see if you can help me or advise me in any way. My head is buzzing and whirling as if it were going to burst. You see I—I don't get letters like this every day."

"No, that's true, and I shouldn't like if you did," promptly returned Jem, seizing the water-jug and sprinkling it liberally about his face and hands till something like their wonted colour returned to his cheeks. "Come on—pull up, old fellow—keep yer pecker up, and never say die."

"That's easily said, Jem," he answered, in a hollow tone; "but what if the lawyer should run off with the money?"

Jem whistled aloud; scratched her leg as usual with the toe of the other foot; and then seated herself on a chair to think, with one leg comfortably drawn up on the chair under her.

"Well, let me see—of course, ye could send the bobbies after him," she gravely began; "but to be sure, ye might cry hookey for the money. Better go over in the morning, and get it from him, and put it in the bank."

"That's worse," said Dickie, with another groan. "The bank might fail—stop payment, as they call it—and then I'd be as poor as ever."

"Ah, that's bad," gravely answered Jem, fingering thoughtfully with her sooty cheeks till she looked like a dog-ribbed Indian.

"Well, I don't know, unless ye locked it all up in your box, and got me to keep an eye on it while ye was out."

"No use," said Dickie. "My box has no lock, and before I could get another strong enough made, the robbers might get at it. There's an awful lot of them about now, Jem."

"So there is," said Jem, who thought Dickie should know

best—she herself having never studied the subject—“I’d take care of it myself for ye, on’y I’d be sure to lose it. I’m awful for losing, especially fardens; I loose every farden old Trotter trusts to me.”

“Of course, Jem, seeing that you’ve been so kind to me, I mean to give you a present out of it,” said Dickie. “You remember the four days I was ill; and they tried to say I had typhus fever and pack me off to hospital; you didn’t believe them, and stuck to me till I was well.”

“Witch your old hunks of a manager kepp off your wages—the whole four days—oh, I remember that,” said the unselfish Jem, with an impressive nod. “Oh, but I don’t want no present; ye better give it to my old father in the poorhouse—may never, ay!—some pipes an’ ’baccy to cheer up his old soul—oh, gollopshus!”

“To be sure I will, and you shall take them into him!” said Dickie, rather animated at the prospect; “and to-morrow we’ll settle how to take care of the money.”

“Oh, yes; I’ll put you to a fly place somewhere to plank it in,” said Jem. “If it was on’y in the coal scuttle, I’d hide it so that the skilled’st robber wouldn’t get at it. I’m practised in it, with the scraps o’ bacon that comes from the lodgers; if I didn’t hide some on ’em I’d never get a taste. Trotter would stick to ’em all.”

“Well, good night, Jem, you’ve made feel cheerier,” said Dickie. “I wish you’d been a man; but I s’p’ose it can’t be help’d now.”

“Oh, never mind, I can fight as good as one any day,” said Jem sturdily; “especially for you, Dickie. See if I don’t pinch you extra coals after this—on’y see;” and with an expressive and goblin wink, Jem was off to her duties.

Dickie could eat no supper that night. Before, he had had more appetite than he could conveniently appease; but now, when wealth was rolling at his feet, he turned from food with loathing, and sat up two hours beyond his regular hour, feverish and restless, and vainly trying to think what he would do with the money. He went to bed at last, and there his thoughts shaped themselves into terrible dreams, in which, bearing a huge blue envelope full of bank-notes, he was pursued along deserted streets by bloodthirsty robbers carrying glittering knives, and then was horrified to find that his legs refused their office. Wildly he seized hold of the street lamp-posts to drag himself along, and even clammily tried to grip

the smooth paving stones for the same purpose ; but though groaning his very heart out, and perspiring in every pore, the fell pursuers always made up to him, and were about to draw their scimitars or razors across his throat, when, with a yell, he awoke to the realities of his den and his legacy.

The tardy dawn of the November morning appeared at last, and then he was surprised to find that he was not at all drowsy, as he had been in the days of poverty, or in the least disposed to lie late. Hurrying over his breakfast, he was out of the house before nine o'clock, and over at Queen Street long before the appointed hour. Ten was his own hour for getting to the office, but he determined to stretch a point for the sake of having his mind at rest. After walking up and down Queen Street about a hundred times, he saw the chambers opened up at last ; walked boldly in, and after waiting some time was duly handed a cheque for £800. With this in his shabby pocket-book, buttoned tightly down next to his heart, he got up to the bank and had it cashed, all in notes. The moment he got out of the building his old fear of robbers returned. Every face he met seemed to have a design on the terrible legacy next to his heart. The legacy of bank notes loaded and weighed him down more heavily than if it had been of lead or gold. The night before, he had tripped along the street cheery and happy ; now he crawled, furtive and suspicious of all mankind, ghastly and wan, and looking as if fresh from a sick-bed. He would have called a cab, as he knew the bank clerks were in the habit of doing ever since the Begbie murder—he shivered as he remembered it—but then he was going to the office, as in duty bound, and he knew the cab would only cause him to be twitted unmercifully by his fellow-clerks. He reached the office at last, though sure that his steps had been dogged by at least half-a-dozen ruffianly fellows ; and then from force of habit he paled and trembled to find that he was an hour and a half late. All the other clerks were hard at work, but the managing partner of the firm looked up furiously in his face.

"Dods! Dods! come here, sir—you are late, sir—two hours late!" he wrathfully thundered.

"Yes, sir, I am very sorry ; but the fact is," stammered Dickie, "I have been over—"

"No excuse, sir. I am surprised at you, when you know that there are five hundred applicants waiting to snap at your situation. Well, you have yourself to blame."

"Yes, sir, I know it is very wrong, but I have just got word

of a legacy of eight hundred pounds, and I wished to draw the money and have done with—”

“Legacy! eight hundred pounds!” echoed the managing partner, with all his wrath vanishing like a flash. “Really, Mr Dods, allow me to congratulate you; your hand, my dear fellow; I am indeed glad to hear the news. Eight hundred pounds! why, that would almost purchase you a partnership in our firm. I really must see about it for you; for you are a very hard-working, deserving fellow. You will remember that I always said that of you.”

Dickie could not remember, but he bowed out of politeness and made for his accustomed seat, feeling very strange altogether.

And then, when the manager was gone from the room, he unguardedly let out the full particulars of the legacy to his fellow-clerks, and, worst of all, admitted his abject fear of a robbery by night, or a garotting or pocket-picking by day. These clever young gentlemen, therefore, quite unawed by his wealth, no sooner drew him out and discovered his fears, than they thought they would indulge in a little amusement at his expense.

“Don’t you think it’s dangerous to carry so much money about with you?” gravely remarked one, after winking smartly from behind his blotting-pad to the others. “There are an awful lot of garotters about, and I see there’s a case of a gentleman attacked in Albany Street in broad daylight.”

“Yes,” added another; “and suppose three burglars, all masked, were to break into your lodging in Lothian Street while you’re asleep, and hold gleaming daggers to your throat, don’t you think you’d be glad to say where you had the money hid?”

“Not I,” said Dickie, though he looked a little scared at the thought. “I think I’d try to resist a little, and p’raps overpower them.”

A roar of laughter ran round the counting-room at the idea of Dickie overpowering anybody, however weak; and at last Dickie got both flushed and angry, while they put their heads together and winked and nudged and plotted in laughing whispers which made Dickie wish for the hundredth time that he had never heard of the awful legacy.

That night Dickie went home more depressed and fearful than ever; but when he unburthened his troubles to Jem, she only shook her sweeping brush vengefully in the air, and said

she wished she had the villains who had thus teased and frightened him. By her advice he then stowed away the terrible pocket-book of bank-notes between the mattresses of his bed ; and shortly after Jem's sooty face reappeared within his door, preceded by the usual thud of her sweeping brush, and he saw her eyes twinkle mischievously as she shouted out—

"Tea's ready! Mrs Trotter's compliments, and you're to come ben. Ho, ho, ho!" she added in an undertone, and with a goblin chuckle ; "keep yer eye open, Dickie, there's something in the wind ; *old Trotter's dressed.*" And then, with an indescribable quick step in her mistress's cast-off slippers, which were a mile too large for her, Jem vanished as before.

Dickie, not a little curious, walked softly along the passage to the kitchen, where he found the fat landlady seated by the fire, and a table spread with the most tempting of tea muffins, pots of jam, rolls of fresh butter, and delicate pastry, enough to make him imagine himself in another world.

"Really, Mrs Trotter, this is too kind," faltered Dickie, "and I don't know what I have done to deserve it."

"Dinna say that, Maister Dods, for ye're the best and maist weel-daein' o' a' my ludgers," quickly observed Mrs Trotter, with as sweet a smile as fatness and sixty could draw on. "Come in by to that seat opposite me, where ye'll be near the fire and oot o' the draught. Jemima, ye demon o' darkness, gang awa' the messages, an' no stand there grinnin' like a stickit pig. You're to get yer tea at the windy after oor a' by wi't."

"Oh, yes, Mrs Trotter—I'm off," said Jem, with great apparent alacrity ; and then they heard her slippers trolloping and flopping out into the lobby, a sound which was followed by the heavy banging to of the outer door ; so that there could now be no doubt in Mrs Trotter's mind that she had fairly got rid of her imp for an hour at least.

"Oh, Maister Dods," sweetly simpered the landlady, as she poured out the second cup, "I dinna ken hoo it is, but ye look that captivat' wi' that bonnie neck-tie that ye just mind me o' my ain Trotter. To be sure, I was quite young—hardly thirty—when I lost him ; and that's four lang years syne ; but I said to him I'll never marry again unless I meet wi' a nice, decent young felly as sweet-lookin' as yoursel'."

"But that is the neck-tie which I always wore," said Dickie, astonished that his landlady had never before noticed its charms.

"Hi, hi, hi!" laughed the landlady. "Oh, but ye are a

wutty man, Maister Dods, pretendin' that ye dinna ken that it's no the necktie but the *linin'* that's in it that I admire."

"The lining?" echoed Dickie, more puzzled than ever. "Why, if you saw it, you wouldn't give a farthing for it—it's so ragged and worn."

"Hi, hi, hi! capital, Maister Dods—capital!" chorused the old widow, playfully poking Dickie under the chin with the longest muffin which she could reach. "'Od, but it mak's me feel rael tosh and comfortable to be under the protection o' sic' a gallant freend. I haenae been blind to yer sweet attentions and wistfu' looks—ay, Maister Dods, ye needna start, for the truth has long been kent to my puir, flutterin' hert."

"Heart! what heart?" asked Dickie, thinking of a certain sheep's pluck which she had brought in for cheapness, the heart of which he had never since seen.

"Ay, ay, I've long kent it, but I aye pretended to be harsh wi' ye, to keep up appearances afore the other ludgers. I'm no that puir either. A body that keeps ludgers, ye see—especially *men* ludgers, wha dinna look sae sherp after things—need never buy onything for theirsels'; for what wi' a bit meat aff this ane's pund, a egg cot o' that ane's dizzen, a pickle sugar here, and a drap tea there, a body need hardly ever gang to the grocer's shop."

"Good heavens! then that accounts for my things always running done so soon?" exclaimed Dickie, in horror.

"Whisht, ye duggie!" playfully and smilingly returned Mrs Trotter; "to be sure ye had to suffer wi' the rest, but it'll a' be yours—a' my bit savin's—every happeny I've earned."

"Goodness gracious! what do you mean?" cried Dickie, starting back with increased horror. "Are you going to die and load me with another legacy?"

A sputtering sound from the direction of the lobby here caused Mrs Trotter to start suspiciously.

"It's awfu' like the nicherin' o' that demon o' darkness, Jemima," she said after a breathless pause; "but, to be sure, it canna be her, as she's been awa' this twenty meenits, and left the pass key on the nail. No, Maister Dods, I'm po gaunna dee, I'm only—eh, hi, hi, hi! I canna say the word, I'm that bashfu'."

"Pray don't distress yourself to say it then—it's not of the slightest importance," lightly returned Dickie, to whom all this was meaningless.

"Oh, but, Maister Dods, ye forget that—that I love ye."

"Love me ! well, that's strange," reflectively answered Dickie, thoughtfully drumming at his empty cup with his teaspoon. "Of course you mean as a grandmother?"

"A—a—a what?" screamed Mrs Trotter, starting back into an attitude, with her best china cup in her hand.

"Oh, ha, ha, ha ! oh, ho, ho, ho !"

There was a sudden burst of demon laughter, and the diabolical head and form of Jem appeared in the doorway, squirming about, holding her sides, and only stopping her horse laugh to start into fresh paroxysms, while the cup in Mrs Trotter's hand fell smash on the floor.

"I heerd ye—I heerd it all ! Oh, Mrs Trotter, I heerd ye makin' love to Dickie ! Oh, ho, ho, ho ! Oh, crinkey-winkey ! but this'll be the death o' me !" and then she went into another fit, till Mrs Trotter, starting up and reaching for the soup-ladle, cleared her out with one wild sweep, and told her she should leave the house at the end of a week.

Dickie, however, had flown ; nor could any message tempt him back again from his own room. He went to bed, and this time dreamt of the old pursuit ; but it was now a fat old widow who pursued, hurling china cups and tea muffins at his head, and howling to him to deliver up the pocket-book of bank notes. At last he was captured, and then she sat down on his chest with the weight of three hundred mountains, and swelled and swelled till she was bigger than the sun ; and then with a horrible start Dickie awoke to a consciousness that some one was getting into his room from the green behind by the open window. Dickie started up and peered through the darkness at the strange sight, not quite sure but he was still dreaming, and too dumfounded to raise any alarm. Three slim-looking burglars, wearing office-coats, but having black masks on their faces and glittering table-knives in their hands, sprang forward, and, pinning him to the bed, demanded fiercely where his bank notes were hidden ?

"Oh, that awful legacy ! Curses on it and the bank notes too !" groaned Dickie ; "it's more bother than it's worth."

"No words !" sternly commanded the leader of the terrible burglars ; "not a whisper above your breath, or you die."

"Yes, we'll cut your throat !" added another, with a wild flourish of the table-knife. "Point out where the money is—quick ! or we may cut your throat first."

With mute despair Dickie indicated the hiding-place between the mattresses ; and while he was held firmly by two of the

robbers, the third brought out the pocket-book, appeared to take out the notes and pocket them, and then threw the pocket-book carelessly on the floor.

"Now, swear on your bended knees that you won't send the police after us!" said the leader; but this Dickie positively refused to do; and then, as they were forcing him into a kneeling posture to enforce the oath, there came a sudden change in the aspect of affairs.

The door of Dickie's room was suddenly thrown open, and Jem, flourishing wildly her heavy-headed sweeping-brush, was among the robbers like an avenger. Dickie saw the terrible head of the brush flop about, and heard the thuds as it descended on heads, eyes, arms, and legs; and then, after an awful uproar of yells and groans, he found all the robber troop gone, and Jem and himself left triumphant on the field.

Everything swam round them and became misty; but when Dickie recovered, he found Jem still by his side supporting him, and gently bathing his forehead with water.

"By O! didn't I give 'em pepper an' salt?" cried Jem in ecstasies. "They're all gone; but I'm feared they've taken the money."

"Oh, that awful legacy! So they have Jem, but never mind," faintly answered Dickie. "It has given me nothing but trouble since I got it; I'm glad it's gone."

"Here's your pocket-book on the floor," added the girl kindly, "but I rather 'spect it's cleaned out. Why, what's this? here's the bundle of notes all right, every blessed stiver of it! it ain't gone after all! oh, gollopshus!"

Dickie, amazed and incredulous, and almost rueful, could scarcely believe his own eyes. He lit the gas, and there, sure enough, was every pound of the legacy, just as he had received it at the bank.

The pocket-book was once more stuffed full and hidden securely in the draught hole of the chimney, and the window fastened down; and then Dickie went to bed, once more loaded with care. Next morning, singularly enough, his fellow-clerks were late in appearing, and then they presented a curious spectacle. One of them had an eye swollen like the cheek of a prize pig, another had his head bandaged behind, and a third could walk only with the aid of two sticks, saying that he had lamed himself with coming unexpectedly against a lump of wood the night before, which was probably quite true.

But Dickie's troubles were not yet at an end. The same night, a chimney, opening into that in his room, caught fire; an alarm was raised; and at last Dickie, half suffocated by the back smoke, and wildly groping up in the chimney for his treasure, was rescued by Jem and carried out into the open air to revive. He could not be induced to go back to the house, but wandered vacantly through the streets, and about four in the morning was arrested by me for "loitering suspiciously" and brought to the Office. Being detained and searched, the bundle of bank-notes was found in his possession, and he was locked up pending inquiries. Next morning, being brought up at the Police Court, he piteously explained his case, and actually implored the Bailie to relieve him of the legacy, which had worn him to a shadow, and brought him so much trouble and disaster. The magistrate smiled, and dismissed him from the bar.

"Get a wife," he said, as a parting advice to Dickie, and speaking probably from experience; "get married, and you will not long be loaded with your legacy."

Away went Dickie, taking the jesting words as solemn advice; and as he knew nobody, what could he do but turn to his friend and adviser, Jem?

"The magistrate said I should get a wife, Jem, and I want you to pick me out one, as I don't know any one, and, indeed, I'd be afraid to ask them if I did."

"Well, there's old Trotter," gravely answered Jem, as she tucked up her leg for a comfortable chat, "but I guess you'd think her too fat and old. Well, then, there's the milk-woman; she ain't a bad 'un, on'y she can't read. Then there's the woman in the baker's; p'r'aps she'd do, but she's awful hard; she never gives anything in to threepence-worth, which I call pison mean—"

Dickie interrupted her with a bright idea of his own.

"I like you, Jem," he said. "You'd do yourself, if you were washed and dressed up a bit. Only you're just rather young—only sixteen, eh?"

"I'm seventeen next month," said Jem, very promptly.

"Very well, I'll just have you," said Dickie, and then Jem joyfully started to her feet.

"Oh! that'll be gollopshus!" she cried, "for I'm awful fond of you, Dickie, and I'll go and give Trotter warning at once. Oh, ho, ho, ho! come an' see me give it!"

"But stop a moment, Jem," said Dickie, blushing in spite

of himself. "Shouldn't you kiss me, when you're engaged to be my wife?"

"Oh, bother!—well, that's true," said Jem, in uncertainty. "But I done that already, when ye was in a faint after the robbers left. I'd do it now, only I've been cleanin' the chimbley, an' I'm afeard I'd leave my mark on ye."

Nevertheless she did salute Dickie very heartily and affectionately, leaving a black mark as large as the top of a cup on his lips; and thus, all unconscious, they went through to the kitchen, and very demurely presented themselves before Mrs Trotter, who first stared at them in astonishment, then raised her hands, and screamed as if she were about to faint.

"Oh, guidness gracious, ye've been kissin' the slavey!" she faintly screamed, fanning herself vigorously. "Oh, ye deceitful, wicked man! Oot o' my sight, baith o' ye!"

Then Jem raised her hands in astonishment and cried, "Me!" and Dickie raised his and echoed "Me!" with a look of innocence which would have touched any but the heart of a disappointed widow. As soon as their real errand was known, they were ordered out of the house, neck and crop. But new friends very quickly turned up in place of Mrs Trotter. Just as Dickie was leaving the house, he was met by the mother of one of his fellow-clerks, who implored him to call off the detective (myself) from hunting down her son for his thoughtless frolic in the sham burglary the night before. To this Dickie at once agreed, at the same time handing over Jem to the lady's care to fit out as his wife. With proper advice the legacy was then profitably invested, and shortly after Jem became Mrs Dods. Her grammar soon improved; but her heart, as I can testify, remained the same to the end—warm, impulsive, and generous.

BLIND MARTHA, THE MESSAGE GIRL.

It may be thought that M'Indoe, seeing that his worst foe was for ever stilled, would have forgone his vow of vengeance against *all thieves*, but such was not the case. There was a hard crust about his heart not easily melted or pierced, though at times a gleam of the better nature within would force itself through; and when fairly recovered from The Ruffian's stabbing, he as persistently as ever hunted down one after another of these wretches as opportunity served. He manifested an intense unctious gloating, a fierce, unquenchable desire to see them suffering, defeated in their plans, and hurled from liberty into prison, which it seemed as if nothing on earth would cool. Yet it was to cool; and from the stern, remorseless hunter and hounder of thieves he was to change to one of the noblest men who ever descended into our wynds and closes, ever tender towards suffering, ever hopeful of the worst, and ever ready to practically assist those struggling towards honesty and well-doing. I will not say that the following simple and interesting case brought about the wondrous change, but I will say that it began it.

Over in George Street, in one of those quiet first flats, there used to be a long signboard announcing "Mrs Strachan's Dressmaking and Millinery Establishment." The windows looked north; and at one of these, the corner one, commanding a beautiful view stretching away down the steep street opposite, over green trees and slopes, and across the Forth to Fife itself, two girls were seated, one day in summer, talking in low affectionate tones. The corner was a little nook shut off by a screen from the rest of the busy workroom; but, to one at least, the retirement did not give ease or idleness, for her fingers and her needle went swiftly and steadily, not even pausing when her bright eyes rested lovingly on the white patient face of the blind girl sitting at her feet. This busy worker was Grace Cumming, aged seventeen, an orphan, and depending on the swift movements of that needle alone for all that she owned in

the world. Gracie was not only the cleverest with her needle of all in the place, but also the cleverest at winning the affections of all about her. Every one in the workroom, with one solitary exception, loved Gracie; but of all those none let the warm affection work down so deeply in their hearts as poor Martha, the blind message girl, whom Miss Finlay, the sharp and hard-faced forewoman, had for some reason of her own introduced to the place some months before.

"I just feel as if I were sitting close to the *sun*, Gracie dear, when I'm beside you," said Martha, tenderly and reverently putting up a hand under the rich brocade upon which her friend was engaged, to touch Gracie's waist. "You're so warm, and bright, and shiny, and your voice is so sweet and musical, it thrills me right through; and oh, if I could only see your eyes! I'm sure they must be the loveliest things on earth. When I run my messages out of the town, and pass under the cool trees, and hear the birds singing so sweetly among the branches above me, I turn my face up to where the dear little things are, and say—'Oh, you are just like my Gracie, for you make every one happy around you.' And then when I go near the little gardens in front of the gentlemen's houses, and the delicious scent of the flowers comes wafting along to meet me, I say, 'That's like Gracie stealing into my inmost heart;' and if they give me a little violet to take away with me, I press it to my lips, and feel its soft leaves on my cheek, and say, 'That's Gracie kissing me.'"

"Oh, but you mustn't get to love me *too* much, Martha," said Gracie, in a low tone, putting up her hand to bite a thread, and noiselessly wiping away something at the same time; "because you know you may be taken away to the Asylum for the Blind, to be taught to sew and work for yourself, and then you wouldn't be nearly so often beside me, and would feel so lonely and strange."

"Feel lonely? I should die!" emphatically responded the blind girl. "Oh, it must be a dreadful place, just like a nunnery or a prison, and I so love freedom, and air, and sunshine, and trees, and birds, that it would kill me to be taken to it; and oh, Gracie, I'm sure that Miss Finlay only threatens me with it, because—because," and Martha hesitated and flushed painfully, "because she is jealous of me loving you."

"Do you really think so?" breathed Gracie, in hushed tones, stopping her needle with a start, and paling a little. "That is strange. Why should she be jealous of you loving me?"

"I don't know; perhaps because I don't love her," softly returned Martha.

"Yes; but why should she wish you to love her?" persisted Gracie, opening her bright eyes still wider. "She is no relation of yours, is she? I always thought you were, like myself, a poor orphan, without a relative in the world."

"So I am," said Martha, with a faint sigh. "At least I *think* I am. But though I never knew father or mother, Miss Finlay has always been a friend to me in a queer way. When I was only six years old, and playing in the sunshine outside the cottage-door, away in the country where I was kept, I suddenly felt her beside me, and then she snatched me up in a harsh hateful way and kissed me. They had told me my mother was coming to see me, and after I had cried a little with the fright, I asked if she was my mother. But then she thundered out 'No!' in my ear, and threw me down and left me to sob myself asleep on the cool grass. Of course she couldn't be my mother, for she has never been married; but she has always looked after me. I used to ask myself if she could be my sister; but then I knew that *that* couldn't be, for she is old enough to be my mother. Perhaps she is related to me in some way, but is ashamed to say so because I'm blind, and of no use in the world."

"Of no use in the world?" echoed Gracie in unfeigned astonishment. "Who said that?"

"She said it, often," Martha replied, with flushed face and lip painfully quivering. "She said I should have died when I was born."

"That is dreadful!" gasped the other, her fingers so trembling with indignation that she could hardly hold the needle. "She must be a bad woman to try to instil such a horrible falsehood into your mind. Of no use in the world! why, you're a blessing to begin with. Don't I say to myself every time the bright needle flashes through my work, 'That's another stitch nearer night, when I'll sit in the gloaming and read to Martha, and teach her to sew, and talk of the beautiful things which she can never see, and plan how to describe them, so that she will actually *think* she sees them? And then her arms will steal round my neck and her cheek will rest against mine, and she will speak such deep and guileless outpourings of her heart, that I shall positively feel as if I were not a lonely orphan, struggling for an existence, but the happiest girl upon earth.' And then, though you are fifteen, and have been so neglected

that you cannot do anything but run errands yet, you're not to be so always. You are to grow up a useful, noble woman, and glide through life as modestly and sweetly as the wee violets of which you spoke, diffusing happiness on every side. Oh, believe me, Martha! she spoke both cruelly and untruthfully, and that you will prove to her some day."

"I shall! I feel that I shall!" impulsively cried Martha, with a sudden hug at her friend. "You have just spoken my inmost thoughts as they rushed through me at the moment her words stung me. My cheeks burned, and her sneering laugh cut me to the heart; but to myself I said, 'I will show you some day that I *am* of use in the world!' And, do you know, Gracie, I'm glad you spoke about the Asylum for the Blind? I should not like to go into it, but when she taunted me I was very near doing a foolish thing. You know that kind lady in Castle Street who advised me to get into the Asylum? Well, she promised not only to pay the money for me and get me admitted, but even said she would give me five pounds to myself for a decent outfit whenever I chose to consent. The moment, then, that I was taunted, I thought of giving up my sweet liberty, and my happiness, and my dear Gracie—all that I might get the five pounds and put it into her hands as part payment for the past, and that I might be no longer indebted to her for counsel or protection."

"You poor, silly girl," murmured Gracie, drawing the blind girl close, and softly wiping the tears from the hot cheeks. "How near I was losing you, and all for that thoughtless, wicked woman. I have always feared her, with her black eyes and her snakish prying questions, but now I shall positively hate her."

"Hush! she might hear you!" cried Martha, in a fearful whisper, looking up apprehensively at the screen which sheltered them from the other workers.

"Hear me? she shall hear me!" cried Gracie, flushing a deeper red. "The very first time she opens her lips to me about you she shall hear all I think of her treatment of you. What has she ever done for you?—nothing but brought you up in ignorance. Her very touch as she comes near you is full of loathing; as if you were absolutely hateful in her eyes. Do not fear for the result either; for if the worst came to the worst, I could always be your protector myself, and we could live together as happy as the day is long."

"Really, Miss Cumming, I am deeply indebted to you for

your high opinion of me," interposed a sharp, malignant voice; and at the moment the forewoman glided from behind the screen and stood towering over the petrified girls. "I have always hated you," continued the dark woman, with distinct emphasis, looking full at Gracie; "nay, for that matter, I hate you both. But as this blind thing happens to be under my care, I must request that from this instant all *her* intercourse with one so base and eager to corrupt as *you* have shown yourself to be shall cease."

A smothered cry broke from Martha, and she shrank back till she cowered, white and trembling, in Gracie's bosom.

"I was not aware that you were listening," replied Gracie, with quiet dignity, and a dangerous arching of the neck and flashing of the eye. "But if I have not long ago spoken my mind even more freely, you may thank this poor girl for the forbearance. Your coarse and brutal treatment of the unprotected orphan would disgrace a savage. I love her, poor child, and am quite ready to incur any abuse you may choose to heap upon me; but you shall not part us. Understand that clearly. I now see through your persistent insolence towards myself for months past, as well as the repeated attempts you have made to undermine my character and have me discharged, and all because the girl whom you never loved or benefited clings to me! Woman, I am ashamed of you!" and for the moment the slim young girl reared herself like a queen, looking straight into the dark face before her, while the sightless eyes of the girl nestling against her bosom were raised to her face, brimming over with gratitude and trembling affection.

As for Miss Finlay, every word in the impulsive burst seemed like a stab through her heart, for at each she gasped, and choked, and tightened her hand on her breast; and then, pale with passion, and showing her teeth like a tigress, she exclaimed—

"Oh, but I will part you. I will not have any one trained to hate me. I hope, Miss Cumming, that that may be the *worst* fault which may be brought against you. People who live in glass houses should never throw stones; however, I *may* be mistaken, and it will be good for you if I am."

"I do not understand riddles," calmly responded the girl; "and threats? if they could have harmed me, I had been dead long ago."

"Then, perhaps you will understand that it is now the dinner-hour, and that all the other girls are gone," sharply returned

the forewoman. "No, Martha does *not* go with you ; I require her for an errand."

Not another word passed between them. Though sorely tempted to reply, Gracie feared for a disastrous result falling upon Martha, in the shape of a banishment to the dreaded Asylum, and remained silent. The forewoman's was a strange face—a dark, deep face, which could cover a hundred secrets with a smooth, unruffled front, and it had never looked more vengeful and malicious to poor Gracie's eyes than it did now. Smothering her fears and her indignation alike, then, and giving the trembling blind girl a parting kiss, she hurried on her things and left them the sole occupants of the big work-room.

"I wish you to take away these woollen cuttings," said the forewoman harshly to the blind message girl, beginning to tug and pull at the bag in which they were kept. "Do not gloom and snivel, for the benefit is your own, and they must be cleared away."

She went switching about the place, picking up rags here and there, but also, to Martha's surprise, going for a moment into Gracie's little recess in which the rolls of cloth were kept ; and in a few moments she placed a heavy bagful in the girl's arms, and told her to go. Now, it happened that Martha's mind being full of her new grief, the bag slipped in her hands and dropped on the floor, but not before she had felt, or imagined she felt, a strange protuberance like the corner of a roll of cloth sticking out from among the rags.

"I beg your pardon, ma'am," said Martha, reddening at the careless slip, and snatching up her load. "But are you sure there is nothing of use inside?"

"Quite sure ! How dare you ask such a question of me?" cried the forewoman, with a sudden fury, at which Martha marvelled exceedingly. "Go this instant ! There is nothing in the bag but waste and rags ; and be sure you take them to the right place"

"Yes, ma'am ; I cannot mistake it," dutifully returned the blind message girl, "and I am much obliged to you for giving me them."

"Tuts ! it is nothing to me ; every message girl gets the rags," returned the forewoman, with a repellant snort.

They were a strange pair, as they stood thus alone with each other. In spite of every cruelty, neglect, and cutting taunt which had been heaped upon her, Martha felt a longing desire

to throw herself into the arms of the forewoman, and hug her tight, and promise to love her, and be dutiful and obedient for evermore, if she would give her only one little kind word to help her on. But the kind word did not come, and she turned away with a sigh, and got out to the showroom beyond, where she was stopped by the mistress herself, just as she was gliding quietly out at the door with her bag.

"What, Martha, are you not gone to dinner yet?" she asked very kindly, as was her wont with all her workers. "Don't you know that it is past two o'clock?"

"Yes, but—but Miss Finlay required me to stay and take away the rags."

"Ah—poor girl!" and Mrs Strachan turned away with a slight sigh of commiseration.

The three words, and the strange tone in which they were uttered—what could they mean? Martha got out of the shop, and into the sunshine, and wandered away over to the Old Town and the Cowgate, which was her destination; but she could not get that pitying sigh out of her head. It had seemed to say—"Ah, poor girl; she is very harsh and unkind to you—*she* who should be so different."

"What can it mean?" asked Martha, in vain reiteration of herself. "Miss Finlay must be a relative of mine—she must be; but there is some secret or shame about it which makes them keep it from me. That's why I'm neglected, and taunted and abused, and told to go and drown myself, because I have been a curse in the world ever since I was born. Oh, how I wish some cab would run me over and kill me! Why does God not kill all the blind girls? No one knows how they are neglected and spurned; but there, I am sinful and unjust—I am not neglected while I have Gracie left me. And I know I am *not* useless! I feel a power within me—a something which tells me that I could lay down my life for the meanest, if they only gave me a kind word or loved me in return."

Arrived at the Cowgate, Martha counted the closes and wynds, in some instinctive way, without touching them, till she arrived at a broker's, whose window bore the ticketed announcement—"Woollen rags bought here." This broker, by the way, was a notorious rascal, and the fact may account for much of the complication which followed.

Martha entered the shop; and being at once recognised as a regular customer, she was accommodated with a seat while the man turned out and weighed the contents of her bag. The

process took much longer than usual; and Martha could not get rid of the idea that, in turning out the contents into the scale, the man gave a smothered start, and then eyed her long and searchingly. It is true, Martha was blind, but she seemed to *feel* his eyes boring into her, and her face flushed crimson accordingly. Perhaps the old reset took the flush for conscious guilt; at all events he said nothing, but emptied the scale, removed the lot hurriedly to the back shop, and then placed in her hands two half-crowns and a shilling. At first Martha mistook the larger coins for pennies, and thus got nearly to the door; then with a start she recognised them as silver, and hurriedly turned back to rectify the mistake.

"I'm afraid, sir, you've made a mistake, and given me too much," she hesitatingly began, holding out the three coins for his inspection.

"Ha! well, you're a cute 'un," he returned, with a coarse laugh, and rattling his hand once more into his pocket. "You know how to ask more—you do. Well, I don't mind giving you a trifle more;" and then to her surprise he placed other two shillings in her hand, making eight in all.

"You mistake me—I did not mean to ask more," said Martha, crimsoning to the ears at his low familiarity.

"Ha, ha!—yes, that's a good joke," returned the man. "Never mind; that's the price I choose to give; and I'll be glad to take at the price as many more rags *of the same kind* as you like to bring."

"I don't know why he gave me so much money this time, or what he means by speaking thus to me," said Martha to herself when she had got outside; "but one thing is certain, I shall never go near the shop again. I would rather lose the paltry money than listen to such language. He seemed to be grinning and winking at me in some low way, as if I were a thief."

On reaching the workroom Martha went straight to the forewoman with the handful of silver.

"Well, what is that?" growled Miss Finlay, looking up from her work with a founce of impatience.

"It is the money I got for the rags—the man gave me far too much, and I brought it to you, as I don't want it, or ever to go back again;" and after this bold speech Martha quivered and flushed, *feeling* that the keen dark eye of the other was glaring into her very heart.

"And why not?" said the forewoman, in an agitated voice.

"Because he spoke to me in a low, familiar way, just as if I were a thief," said Martha, with a burst of indignation.

"*You*—you—a thief?" slowly gasped the forewoman, with increasing agitation. "Hush! child; no one on earth dare say such a thing. Put away the money; it is your own; but never breathe another word of the thing to a soul, remember. Now, run for your dinner."

Martha was stunned and amazed, and more deeply mystified than ever, and almost staggered as she once more got out to the open air. What could the forewoman's sudden agitation and strange, impulsive words mean?

"She actually seemed for the moment as if she cared for me," thought Martha, with a thrilling flutter at her heart—"as if she secretly loved me, and would have fought and torn any one who could have dared to call me a thief. How strange! Perhaps I have been seeing only the outside of her all along."

Martha had a lodging of her own provided for her by the forewoman, but she was oftener in that of Gracie, in Rose Street, and thither she now turned her steps, after making some purchases with her newly-acquired wealth in a shop on the way. At the bottom of the stair the two girls ran full against each other; and then a warm kiss told Martha who was before her. "Come up again, Gracie, dear," she said, carefully shielding her fragile little parcel with her hands as she went. "I want to show you something I have got for you."

A few ribbons, a bonnet frame, and one or two artificial flowers, just the kind which Gracie most admired, were duly drawn from the bag by Martha's hands; and then joyfully clapping her hands, she cried—"Now whose bonnet are these for?"

There was no answer. Gracie was too astonished to find voice; so Martha added—"They're for my Gracie, who wants just such a bonnet as they'll make!" and then she stole round and kissed her friend in a burst of triumph and joy.

"Impossible. I can't take them," said Gracie. "You are far too good; they're expensive flowers, too; where did you get them?"

Martha was about to say something about rag-money, but then the injunction of the forewoman came back to her and drove the words away.

"Ah, that's the secret," she smilingly replied. "But they're yours for all that; and I'll sit by you to-night when you make

it up ;” and then with another tender embrace the two friends parted, quite unconscious of the dark cloud which was now lowering over both.

Not half-an-hour after Gracie had returned to her nook in the workroom, the forewoman cried sharply over the screen—“Miss Cumming, please to hand me the roll of black jacket cloth from the shelf at your side.”

Gracie stooped forward to comply, so certain of the position of the roll of cloth that she scarcely raised her eyes to look for it. But the hand did not touch it. Looking up with a start, she saw other rolls of cloth—grey, brown, and blue—lying safely in their respective places, but the black roll was gone !

“It is not here, Miss Finlay,” she quietly and respectfully spoke back over the screen, after laying down her work and having a vain search over the shelf. She did not see the face of the forewoman, but others in the workroom did, and marvelled at its pale and excited look.

“It is there !” sharply persisted the forewoman, leaving the cutting-table, after banging down the scissors in a way which fixed every eye in the workroom upon her. “I know it is there, because I saw it on the shelf just before you left for dinner.”

Gracie said nothing ; but with hot cheeks resumed her seat and bent determinedly over her work. She could not, dared not trust herself to reply to such a dreadful insinuation as that which appeared hidden in the last words. The dark, malevolent face of the forewoman flashed round the screen ; a figure which Gracie did not deign to look at flitted hurriedly about the shelf ; and then the awful words were hissed out—

“Miss Cumming ! No one sits near this spot or approaches it but yourself and the message girl ; you were last near the shelf ; the cloth was there before you went to dinner, and it is now gone. How do you account for that ?”

There was a strange, painful hush among the workers as they crowded round accuser and accused ; a dead stillness, like the lull before a crash of thunder. Gracie dropped her work, stood up, pale to the lips, and with one flashing look confronted the woman before her.

“Miss Finlay,” she slowly got out with forced calmness, “do you mean to imply that *I* am the thief ?”

“I do !” cried the other, with reckless fury ; “I have long suspected you, though others whom I know would not hear a word against you. You can scarcely expect Mrs Strachan to

remain your friend now ; and who knows but this is only one article out of dozens ? ”

Gracie was choking—gasping—but still she would not give her enemy the luxury of wringing from her a tear. Before the burst of indignation could rise to her lips, the crowd parted and admitted Mrs Strachan herself.

“ What is the matter ? What does all this mean ? ” she inquired, in a flutter of surprise and concern.

“ It means that this girl, whom you have so long persisted in trusting, has gone a step too far, and taken a roll of cloth,” quickly returned the forewoman, with studied malice.

“ Miss Finlay ! ” cried Gracie, rearing herself with flashing eyes, “ I am an orphan, with no one in the wide world to protect me or speak for me, but beware how you carry your hate and malice too far. It may rebound with crushing force upon your own wicked head. There is a Father there who will not see me wronged ; ” and she pointed straight upwards, with an ethereal brightness and faith which made the other cower in spite of herself.

“ This is all very fine,” blustered the guilty woman at last, “ but it will not bring back the stolen cloth. Perhaps you would not care to have your lodgings searched ? ”

“ You may search me or my lodgings, or do with me what you please,” was the quick reply ; “ I wish the vile plot to be laid bare, and those who originated it brought to justice. If you do not discover the thief, rest assured I shall ! ”

This test being thus submitted to, the forewoman, Mrs Strachan, and Gracie went round to Rose Street together and searched the little room at once. Nothing of a suspicious nature was found, until the forewoman pounced upon a long cloak of waterproof cloth, which she triumphantly held up to view.

“ Ha ! you are not a thief, are you not ? What do you call this ? ” she cried, handing the article at the same time to her mistress for inspection.

“ That, I admit, belongs to Mrs Strachan. It is one of the stock cloaks which you yourself told me to put on last night as the rain was so heavy. I forgot to bring it round this morning.”

“ Which I told you to put on ? ” echoed the forewoman, with pretended astonishment. “ Miss Cumming, you are a base liar ! I never saw it nor spoke of it till I found it here this moment. Mrs Strachan, send for a policeman.”

But this the kindly mistress hesitated to do, and while she

stood thus in the awkward fix the door burst open, and Martha rushed in.

"Oh, Mrs Strachan, believe me, Gracie is innocent!" she cried, taking the hand of her mistress and wetting it with her tears. "She is incapable of such a sin. I know her inmost heart, and know that she could not do such a cruel, wicked thing."

"Send for a policeman!" again demanded the forewoman.

"Then send for him!" cried Gracie. "It is my only chance of receiving justice."

"No, no, do not kill her!" pleaded Martha, "for, even though she should be found innocent, the guilty suspicion will cling to her, and make others shun her ever after. Oh, Mrs Strachan, have mercy on her, and let the thing pass. It will be found out yet, and then you will be glad you took my advice."

"I will take away the cloak," gravely replied the mistress at last, "and I will not call in the police if Miss Cumming will make good the loss of the cloth. What is its value, Miss Finlay?"

"About three pounds ten," was the gloating reply.

"I cannot pay it, for I have not a pound in the world!" replied Gracie, bursting into tears at last on seeing even her mistress's faith shaken. "But though I had thousands at my command I would not pay it!—no, I will not compromise with guilt!"

"But I will!" cried Martha, drying her tears, and looking up with a radiant face—"I will save you from the horrible suspicion, and the police and the dark prison, whether you will or no, dear Gracie! I have five pounds; at least I know where I can get it, and I will! Oh, Mrs Strachan, bless you for your kindness to Gracie! I will never forget it."

A wild, sharp cry broke from the forewoman.

"Mad girl! what would you do?" she cried, in great agitation and alarm.

"Nothing. I will take the lady's offer and go into the Asylum for the Blind," chokingly replied Martha, trying to smile.

"No, no, girl—you are mad! I—I could never part with you?" wildly and incoherently continued the forewoman; "at least, I mean I would not like you to go there."

"Nor I," cried Gracie. "I will not allow Martha to make such a sacrifice."

"Ah, but you must," persisted Martha, with a brave smile. "And you mustn't think anything of the sacrifice. I'm only a blind girl, you know. It won't matter though I lose my liberty; they'll let me out sometimes to see you, Gracie; and it's sweet

to be able to do something for those we love. You see, I'm always in darkness; and though I love the birds and the sunshine, and the trees and flowers, I never see them after all, and so the confinement of the Asylum won't make much odds. Hush, hush!—don't cry like that—it goes through my heart, and makes me feel like to burst out when I should be smiling with joy at being able to help you. Kiss me, darling, and say that you're glad I'm going. You know I have nobody to love but you."

But Gracie would not say it—though she did kiss her repeatedly—and then to their surprise they found that both Mrs Strachan and the forewoman were weeping quietly in concert.

"Don't say that you have nobody to love but her," huskily whispered the forewoman, with that strange agitation which sometimes thrilled through her voice. "You have me."

"You?" echoed Martha hotly. "No! I do not love you; I hate you!"

A scream, sharp and quick, interrupted her; and then in a shiver of pity she drew close to the guilty woman.

"No, no! forgive me," she impulsively and tearfully murmured, touching the forewoman's face gently with her soft fingers. "I do not hate you, for you have been kind to me, and I am only a poor blind girl, while you are—"

"Your mother!" breathed the forewoman, trying to draw her close, and glancing fearfully over at the others, to make sure that she was not overheard—"Will you still persist in leaving me, Martha?"

It was the first gentle word the blind girl had heard from those lips, and it thrilled her to the heart. But her answer came clear and steady, notwithstanding the surprising discovery she had just made.

"I will try to love you, mother," she gently whispered, "but I must save Gracie."

Thus they left the house in silence, the forewoman being steeled again at the hated name, and Gracie herself being resolved not to allow the sacrifice to be made. Martha got permission to go somewhere on business of her own, and at once went to the lady in Castle Street, to tell her, with a strange firmness, that she had at last consented to become an inmate of the Asylum for the Blind. The lady was delighted, and commended her resolution; and Martha wept silently as she came out with five crisp bank notes in her hand "to get her an outfit."

And Gracie? where was she? She had not gone back to the workroom—did not think that she ever would—but, choking

with indignation, had made her way over to the Central Police Office, in the High Street. She hesitated and shuddered as she looked up at the great building, and then timidly ventured to inquire which was the way in at two men who were chatting earnestly together at the mouth of the pend. These two men were Hugh M'Indoe and myself; and noticing her trepidation and excitement, I gradually drew from her the facts I have given, as far as they concerned herself and her own actions. Her youth, her simplicity, and apparent loneliness excited my liveliest sympathy and interest, and the same feeling was manifested by M'Indoe.

"Dry your tears, and consider the thing done," he said, with an unusual lighting up of the eye as she concluded; "I will hunt down the thief, and land him or her in prison before twenty-four hours are gone."

Meanwhile Blind Martha had turned away from the house of the lady in Castle Street with five one-pound notes in her hand, with her thoughts—relieved of at least one dreadful strain, the immediate peril to Gracie—surging to the surface in strange confusion on three different points. The first was the startling revelation just made to her that the dreadful woman who from her earliest days had seemed to be her guardian was her mother. Yet this very woman, by her own confession, was unmarried. Martha, then, was a— She did not finish the thought, but her cheeks burnt as the flash went through her mind, and her limbs shook and trembled beneath her till she was fain to grope for an area railing, and sit down on a stone step to recover. The next point was, how had the cloth been stolen? Nobody, Martha reasoned, went in behind that screen where the rolls were kept but Gracie, Martha herself, and—and her mother. Nobody else could have gone near it without the circumstance being noted and commented upon; and yet the cloth had vanished! How? This thought led to the third point: who was the thief? It was not Gracie; Martha laid that down first and foremost as a settled point. Then it was not Martha herself; she smiled sadly, and shook her head at the thought. She would have been only too glad to have admitted the theft had she been the criminal, if only to save Gracie from a tear or a moment's pain. Then there was but one person left—Miss Finlay, the forewoman, her mother.

"Can it be possible?" Martha asked herself, while a flush of shame mounted her face at the thought. "Could she, my mother, have hidden the cloth out of hatred to Gracie and jeal-

ousy of her love to me? No; there cannot be such a wicked wretch on earth; no one would try to plot against a defenceless orphan, and such a loving, dear girl as Gracie. And yet the cloth was there on the shelf directly before Gracie went to dinner, and when every other girl was gone. Could—oh heavens! I never thought of that before.”

With a sudden spasm of agony, Martha's hand had gone up to her face—no longer flushed, but deadly white; and for a moment the whole universe seemed to be rocking and swaying around her.

“There *was* something strange, and hard, and bulky in that bag of rags which I took over to the Cowgate,” she slowly gasped to herself. “I felt it, and was going to speak of it at the time. And then the broker's strange words, and the great sum of money he gave me—whole eight shillings instead of one or two! I must ask her quietly, in private; she is my mother, but she shall clear my Gracie, or suffer for it! Hush! what am I saying? I must cling to my mother, and love her, and defend her; Gracie would spurn me if I did otherwise. Yet I must—I shall discover the truth!”

There was no hesitation or trembling about Martha now. She rose from the step, made for the workroom in George Street, and, to her great relief, found the forewoman alone in the showroom in front, and Mrs Strachan herself just on the threshold, going out to dinner.

“If you please, ma'am, I have brought the money for Gracie,” Martha began, touching her employer gently on the arm to detain her, and producing the five pounds.

Mrs Strachan paused in drawing on her gloves, and looked pityingly down on the eager face and sightless eyes.

“Do you still persist in sacrificing your liberty for this girl, Martha?” she asked, with unusual tenderness.

“I persist in saving Gracie, because she is innocent,” was the firm reply; “I know she has not the wickedness in her heart to conceive such a crime; and I know, at least I think, that the real thief will be discovered soon.”

Mrs Strachan sighed, took three of the notes from Martha's hand, returned the other two, and retired, leaving mother and daughter alone together.

Martha stood as she had entered, fingering nervously at the two notes in her hand, and with a strange mixture of defiance, awe, and love towards the woman before her welling up in her heart.

"Don't stand there fidgeting like a fool, girl!" harshly exclaimed the forewoman, after an awkward silence of some minutes' duration. "Speak out what you wish to say, and have done with it!"

"I have nothing to say, moth—ma'am," faltered Martha; "but—but—I would like to know if my father is alive?"

"No, dead—dead!—and my curse went with him!" was the steady reply. "But what would that matter to you? You are only a bastard."

"Oh!" Martha's hand went to her heart as if the word had stabbed her; but the next instant, though pale, she was firm as ever.

"Yes; you forced the truth from me," bitterly continued the mother. "Now you know all my shame and your own; go and tell every one!"

"I will not—even to Gracie; the secret is safe, even with me," piteously answered Martha. "I will try to love you, mother."

The forewoman turned away with an impatient jerk; but to her surprise Martha still lingered in the showroom.

"Are you not gone yet?" she angrily observed. "Don't you know that you're blind; and an ugly thing to look at; and a thing that ladies would faint at the sight of; and only fit to be shoved into a hole out of sight?"

"I know it, ma'am!—oh, I know it!" wailed out Martha, clasping her hands hard on her breast to control the beating of her heart, which seemed as if it would choke her where she stood. "But I want to ask you one thing—" and there she stopped, shaking with dread.

"Out with it, then, and begone!"

"Are you sure that the roll of cloth which is missing did not drop into the bag of rags which I took over to the Cowgate to-day?"

The question was simply asked, but it was followed by a dead stillness, such as one would fancy might precede the bursting of a volcano; then Martha heard her mother panting and gasping close to herself, and the next moment received a sudden blow on the cheek which nearly drove her through a glass case at the other side of the room.

"How dare you ask such a question?" hoarsely whispered the forewoman, with the same agitation which had before puzzled Martha so much. "Do not again breathe such a word—think it even—in my presence, or I know not but I might strangle you with my own hands!"

With an iron grasp she hurled Martha from the showroom into the workroom; and there Martha glided quietly past the chattering work-girls to the deserted nook behind the screen, and laid her head on her two hands, and wept as if her heart would burst.

It was not the cruel blow, which yet tingled on her cheek, or the still more cruel words, which drew the tears; it was the sudden and dreadful confirmation of her worst fears and suspicions regarding the thief of the cloth.

"Gracie is innocent; I knew it from the first!" she breathed to herself, in hushed tones. "But, oh, to think that I have been made the means of the terrible blow! and yet I cannot tell her the truth, for, not knowing that Miss Finlay is my mother, she would walk straight to the police and have her taken up and put in prison. Ah, no! I cannot save even Gracie to condemn my own mother; I wish I could save them both by suffering myself. It wouldn't matter though I were dead. I'm only fit to be shoved into a hole out of sight, and there's no blindness in heaven. After all, my mother's jealousy may have sprung from her love to me, though she tries to hide it under harsh words and even blows. And then, what right have I to speak? I am only a bastard; a thing to be hooted at! O God! now I know why she wished me dead when I was born; and I understand the feeling, for I have it here myself. I wish something would come and kill me quick, for I can do no good in this world."

From these and a hundred kindred reflections Martha was at last roused, by some sharp words imperatively thundered forth in the forewoman's well-known voice, and coming from the direction of the showroom. A firm and indignant rejoinder in the clear voice of Gracie, coupled with the swift rush of all the hushed work-girls in the direction of the voices, gave Martha a clue to what was going on, and sent her staggering forward till she found herself beside her friend.

"I have told you that you cannot be admitted," cried the forewoman, in her steady, malignant tones, addressing poor Gracie, and trying to snatch Martha with a wrench from her side. "If a fool has sold herself to save you from prison—yes, a fool, whom I could strangle with my own hands!—that is no reason why you should be admitted among honest people. Don't forget that you are a *thief*!"

Gracie started right back, but the indignant burst rising to her lips was checked by beholding the sudden pallor and agi-

tation of the blind girl at her side. Martha, white as a sheet, and hoarse with excitement, restrained her friend with a jerk, and, bending forward to the forewoman, clasped her hands and cried—

“Mercy! oh, have mercy upon her! *I know* she is innocent!”

“I am innocent!” proudly exclaimed Gracie, with a flashing look, “and I will not be put down or made to cower like a thief—not though all the malicious women in the world were leagued for my destruction! Let the thief tremble, for even now the detectives are on the track—”

A scream from Martha drowned the sharp cry of surprise emitted by the forewoman herself, and prevented the eyes of the crowd from noticing her guilty agitation and alarm. Martha seized her friend's hand, and, kissing it repeatedly and wetting it with her tears, she dropped on her knees beside her and imploringly cried—

“Oh, Gracie! you will recall that act?—you will not let them hunt down the thief? It would do no good now, and I have saved you; remember I have saved you. Say that you will call them off, and let the matter rest!”

“I will not call them off, or let the matter rest till I have cleared my name,” cried Gracie, with a scathing look into the lowering face of the forewoman. “I do not know who the thief is, but I have a guess; and not for worlds would I sacrifice myself and my dearest friend to hide a crime!”

“But if I wish it—implore it!” persisted the blind girl. “I have made a sacrifice for you—oh, Gracie, what greater sacrifice could I make, unless to go into the very prison itself? Say you will make this sacrifice, and I will bless you all the days of my life!”

The strange agitation of her usually calm and gentle friend—her pallor and tears—her twining entreaty—caused Gracie to start and open her eyes in a wondering suspicious glance. Why should Martha show guilty agitation? Could it be possible that she herself—No! the thought was too monstrous. Gracie banished it on the instant. She drew the blind girl closer, and whispered softly in her ear—

“There is some mystery here, Martha. Why should you wish guilt to go unpunished? Is it possible that you too are changing towards me? Why did you refuse to say whence the money came which you used to-day to buy me the bonnet things? Oh, Martha! whatever you do, don't let any cloud get between *us*!”

The tone, more than the actual words used, went right to the heart of the blind girl, and with a groan she shrank away and covered her face with her hands.

"Oh, Gracie," she slowly and piteously exclaimed, "believe anything about me—but that."

Gracie started again, and scanned her friend more curiously and anxiously than before; but before the words rising to her lips were pronounced, a shuffling of heavy feet outside the glass door drew all eyes in that direction, and sent an ominous quiver through at least two hearts in the room. Before allowing the door to open, however, it will be necessary for the reader for a moment to pause and follow the movements of M'Indoe and myself, after parting from Gracie at the mouth of the Old Fishmarket Close.

As this interesting girl, in her tears and excitement, had not spared the character of the forewoman, but had firmly given her opinion that she, and she alone, was at the bottom of the mischief, it naturally followed that our eyes were in the first place turned in that direction for the criminal.

"She cannot have taken the cloth to her own home," said M'Indoe decisively, "for, according to the girl's statement, she and the mistress of the establishment are cousins, and live together. Still less likely is it that, however malicious she may be, she would risk hiding it about the workroom. Yet, with no one in the place but the three, the cloth vanished. But mark this little fact—we have only the forewoman's word that the cloth was in its place before the accused girl left for dinner. She might have removed it hours before—p'r'aps the night before. Now, it is not likely that she would destroy it, nor is it likely that she would try a pawnbroker with goods not made up. Well, as the place next likely, suppose we try some of those little tailors' shops in Niddry Street or St Mary's Wynd, which buy in and sell over again tailor's cuttings and superfluous furnishings? If she is really a dishonest woman, such a place, above all others, would be likely to be patronised by her."

The reasoning seemed sound enough, and I jumped at anything which seemed likely to give us a clue; but, in spite of its ingenuity, it might have led to nothing but disappointment, had not the man who all the time possessed the cloth got uneasy in his mind, and tried, in a most ingenious way, to secure himself from detection. It is true he had bought the roll of cloth as rags, and was not bound to enter it in his book; but he knew of old the sharpness and severity of the law in looking

through such quibbles, and, feeling anything but secure from search, he resolved to get rid of the cloth in a most practical way, by having a coat and trousers made out of it for himself. Wrapping the cloth into a tight bundle, he made his way down to a tailor's shop in Niddry Street, in which he left the cloth after he had had himself measured; and he had just turned out of the shop to descend the steep street when he met M'Indoe and myself full in the face. M'Indoe owed him a grudge, and would have allowed him to pass with a scowl of hatred and loathing, but the unusual sight of a smile and a cringing bow from the old reset made him open his eyes and put out a strong hand to grasp him and tug him back.

"Well, old Rags-and-bones, what are you after?" he growled out in the man's face. "No good, I'll swear, when you condescend to smile to a detective or myself."

"Ha, ha! Mr M'Indoe, you will have your little joke," cried the old man, rubbing his skinny hands in pretended delight, though inwardly, as I suspected, quaking with fear. "A thief 'ud have a bad chance even with yerself. I'm not after anything; only getting myself measured for a coat and trousers."

"Ah, indeed! have you seen any black cloth floating about?" returned M'Indoe simply, and relaxing his grasp of the man's collar. The words, of course, were spoken aimlessly and by chance, and I for one would have been the last to expect anything to come of them. Yet their effect was marvellous. The skinny old broker staggered back; every drop of blood left his withered face; his jaw dropped in amazement and terror; his hands shook as if seized with ague; and altogether he seemed so overpowered and stupefied, that a mere puff would have blown him to the ground like a feather. The man's guilty shrinking struck me as so peculiar, that partly from instinct, and partly with a desire to keep him from dropping on the pavement, I laid my hand lightly on his arm. It had been there before, when hauling him to prison for an audacious reset case which encouraged crime among boys; and thinking that all was known, and that I was about to repeat the dose, he incautiously blurted out—

"Good God, you don't mean to take me away! If there's anything wrong with the cloth, I'm not to blame. I swear by all that's holy that I found it."

"Ha! indeed!" shouted M'Indoe and I in one breath, as our eyes met, and my grasp tightened on the broker's collar. "Was it over about George Street that you picked it up?"

The simple words seemed to paralyse him afresh. He well knew that the girl who had brought the rags hailed from Mrs Strachan's, in George Street ; and now giving up every hope, he relapsed into that dogged silence which is the last hope of the criminal and to us a sure proof of guilt.

"Let's go in and have a look at the cloth," suggested M'Indoe, seeing that the broker was fairly silenced ; and in we went together.

The proprietor of the shop was seated on the "board" cross-legged at his work, and looked up with an ominous scowl as he recognised me. Before any secret signs could pass from one to the other, I got between them and smilingly said—

"This gentleman wishes you to show us the cloth which he gave you just now to make up."

The man stared and hesitated after another attempt to see the face of the reset for telegraphed instructions.

"You'd better show us it quick, and the right piece, too," I sharply added, "unless you wish to be taken as an accomplice."

Thus quickened in his thoughts and movements, the tailor stepped forward and brought out from under the "board" a parcel of black cloth, newly opened out, of which I at once took possession.

"I'm afraid you'll have to come with me after all," I added, as blandly as possible to the tailor, when this matter had been adjusted. "There is an unhealthy air about your shop ; they say it makes thieves of tailors' apprentices, and even at times of tailors themselves ; but if you can prove your innocence, of course your detention will be short."

"I know nothing about it, but that he brought me the cloth and had himself measured," replied the shaking tailor, white to the ears, and trying to get his things on.

"Nor I either," excitedly added the broker. "I bought it as rags. If blame lies anywhere it must be upon the girl."

"Ha ! then it was a girl who sold it ?" I cried ; but then, seeing the slip he had made, he relapsed into silence.

"That's a lie at anyrate," interposed M'Indoe, in a whisper to me ; "I'd almost swear the girl was a woman."

I said nothing. I was inclined, from the impulsive way in which the words had been uttered, to think that they were the truth ; but then all our inquiries and searches pointed to the forewoman as the thief, and even I could not give up the carefully-elaborated theory at a moment's notice.

We marched the two up to the Office, the word let out by

the broker puzzling me the whole way ; and then we walked over to George Street. Just as we reached the foot of the stair—which happened to have no sign at the bottom—a lady passed us to go up, and to her we addressed the query—

“Doesn't this lead up to Mrs Strachan's?”

“Yes ; I am Mrs Strachan,” she politely responded, leading the way up. “Did you wish to see me?”

“We did,” I made answer, giving her my name, which drew an unpleasant shade over her face. “The fact is, we have found the stolen cloth, and have come to arrest the thief.”

“I am indeed sorry and displeased to learn that it has come to this,” said Mrs Strachan, in pained surprise. “Did Miss Finlay, the forewoman, put the matter into your hands after my express injunctions to the contrary?”

“She did not. The girl who placed the matter in our hands gave the name of Grace Cumming.”

“Gracie !—then is she not the thief?” cried the lady, with a great start, pausing and looking me in the face just as she was about to open the door.

“I think not,” was my grave reply.

“Who is, then?”

“You will see presently ;” and I motioned her to open the door.

This brings me exactly to the point at which I left off. Just as suspicion was settling in Gracie's mind, and Martha was groaning out, “Gracie, believe anything about me but that,” the shuffling of our feet outside ceased, the door was opened by the mistress of the establishment herself, and we all stood face to face.

Gracie was the first to speak.

“Here are the detectives,” she joyfully cried, “the gentlemen I spoke to at the Police Office,” and she threw a fearless look in the direction of the forewoman. “Now we shall learn who is the thief.”

A sharp cry from the pallid forewoman and a faint scream from Martha greeted the words, and then I added, keeping my eyes fixed rigidly on the forewoman's face—

“Yes ; we have got the cloth and the reset who bought it,” and now we have come to arrest the thief.”

The jaw of the guilty woman fell, and her eyes appeared ready to jump from her head ; then she tried to gasp out something like words, but succeeded in producing only a husky mumble ; and then, rather more sternly, I added—

"And now, ma'am, I have to ask you if *you* know anything of the thief?"

The guilty agitation, baffled hate, and impotent fury of the woman whom I was addressing increased, and convulsed her dark features to a degree frightful to behold, while the face of Gracie with corresponding rapidity became bright and radiant; but before any words could escape either, there was a sudden movement of the blind girl opposite them which instantly attracted every eye in the room.

"You have come for the thief?" she said, with a deadly paleness and a strange calmness which I could not have expected in one so young and fragile. "I am sorry I did it, and I deserve all the punishment that you can give me. I am the thief!"

A burst of astonishment came from every one in the room, and it was but the echo of that which rose to my own lips.

"Good God!" I exclaimed, turning to M'Indoe, "then the broker spoke the truth after all; it *was* a girl who stole the cloth."

"I am glad he has confessed that—oh, I am glad!" impulsively cried Martha, with something like real ecstasy in her tones. "Yes, I stole the cloth and sold it, and spent the money, or lost it, or something."

"Oh, Martha!" screamed Gracie, "you must be mad! You could never, never have been so wicked and deceitful!"

Martha shivered and bent her head till it dropped into her hands, and then murmured—

"Yes, I am very wicked and guilty; take me away and put me in prison."

"But, stay," I imperatively interposed, incredulous in spite of the confession; "did you do it of your own accord? Did no one prompt you to the deed?"

"No one—no one!" wildly replied the blind girl, becoming more agitated at the suspicion. "I did it all myself; I am so covetous and bad. Take me away to jail, for I am only fit to be shovelled into a hole out of sight."

I turned away in amazement, and as I did so my eye fell on the forewoman. Curiously enough, her colour was rapidly returning; she appeared to breathe more freely, and raised her head and towered over the blind girl with at least a semblance of her former imperious manner.

"What!" she cried; "is this, then, the return you have made for all my kindness? You base, wicked young hypo-

crite! to steal under my very eyes and have me blame another, and that other your friend! Oh, Martha, I could not have believed you would have gone thus far!" and she dropped into a seat, and, covering her face with her hands, appeared to weep real tears of grief and agitation.

Strangely enough, Martha appeared to see some hidden meaning in the last sentence, for she flushed up, tremblingly crept forward, took the forewoman's hand in her own, and dutifully kissed it, and then I could scarcely believe my own ears as she murmured—

"Oh, it was wicked—cruel!—but the thief is sufficiently punished. It does not matter what happens to a blind girl."

The forewoman groaned, and wrenched away her hand as if she had been stung.

"Sufficiently punished?" indignantly burst forth Gracie, flushing to the ears, and almost weeping as she hurled the words forth—"Oh, Martha, how can you be so callous, so insensible to the cruelty you have inflicted upon me? Base, ungrateful girl! Now I understand your fear of the police being informed, and see whence came the money which you used for me this morning! Oh, Martha! I would to God that I had been taken to prison innocently, that I had died, had my very heart cut out, before I had found you such a cruel, hardened thief! Ay, wince, and cringe, and weep if you like—you are a thief! a thief! a thief!"

"Gracie! Gracie! oh, Gracie!" screamed Martha, throwing up her arms, "kill me! kill me; but do not believe—oh, my heart, my heart is breaking!" and then with a faint stagger she dropped senseless upon the floor.

Thus we gathered her up—poor stricken thing!—and got a cab to take us to the Office. There she revived sufficiently to be able to repeat her statement; and then we brought in the reset, who no sooner saw her than he admitted that she had sold him the cloth for eight shillings, and that he had not entered the same in the book kept for the inspection of the police. The Niddry Street tailor was released; but Martha and the broker were next day arraigned upon their own confession, when, after a severe lecture from the bench upon the heinous ingratitude of which she had been guilty, Blind Martha, the message girl, was sentenced to imprisonment for thirty days, sixty being allotted to the older and more experienced reset.

And thus, I thought, justice was done and the wrong righted.

But the scales were soon to be taken from my eyes. In spite of her apparent rage—her reproaches and her bravado—the forewoman, Martha's mother, sank into a moody, fretful state, which was increased to a stinging remorse as she saw the meek girl whom she had all along spurned as an unclean thing thus nobly suffering for her. Her agony and remorse were increased by the grave silence and suspicious manner of Mrs Strachan herself—the only one who knew of the relationship between her forewoman and the blind girl—and in the end it landed her in a malignant fever. Then it was that, face to face with death, as she felt herself to be, she made confession of the truth. This confession, which the horrified Mrs Strachan listened to with bated breath, sent that kind lady flying over in a cab to me at about eleven o'clock at night. It happened, however, to be exactly on the night before Martha was to be released; and though the facts were acceptable, and afterwards recorded, they could now make no difference to the prisoner. Next morning at ten o'clock a cab was in waiting at the jail door, and no sooner was the pale shadow of the blind girl fairly outside the heavy portal than she was impulsively clasped to the heart of Gracie! Then her little strength gave way, and bursting into tears she cried—

“Oh, how I have prayed for this! Take me away from here and let me die, for now Gracie believes me innocent!”

She revived after they got to Mrs Strachan's home in Queen Street, but for long she could not be induced to go into the room of her dying mother. At last she was half carried in; but when the fevered hand was placed within her own she still tried to steel herself against the forgiving spirit welling up in her heart.

“No, I could suffer for you, mother; I can even forgive you, but I cannot love you,” she faintly answered. “I am blind, and a bastard, and poor and lonely, and of no use in the world, but—”

“Oh, Martha, do not cut me to the heart with my own cruel words,” hoarsely interrupted the dying woman. “You saved me! saved your mother from prison and disgrace.”

Martha said nothing in reply, but the tears filled her sightless eyes, her light grasp tightened on the hot hand, she bent forward with all the clouds chased from her face, and kissing passionately the lips of the dying woman, murmured with ineffable sweetness the one word—

“Mother!”

In that tight embrace, and with that joyful unity of hearts, the two parted for ever in this world. Gracie and Mrs Strachan led her from the room, and did not venture to tell her for weeks that her mother was gone. Her own health, indeed, was long critical, and at one time she thought herself so near death that she requested that the "two detectives" who had hunted her down might be sent for to see her. M'Indoe and I went at once, and listened to her kind and piteous breathings, which were an entreaty never to judge harshly of a thief, or to be sure that we had the real guilty one, when every fact seemed to confirm the conviction.

M'Indoe was deeply moved—more deeply, I believe, than he cared to show even before me—and from that day I could notice a steady alteration in his character. Instead of hunting thieves to prison, he now tried upon every occasion to help them to honesty. He rose steadily in business, had numbers of men working under him—many of them reformed thieves—but never to my knowledge did he hound another to prison. If the crop was scant, we must remember the frightful sterility of the soil. A thief is not easily helped to honesty and well-doing; it is a fight every way. Yet this strange lonely man, who appeared to have no joy left upon earth, helped many out of the mire. But he was old before his time, and his wondrous strength gave way quite suddenly. He had removed, as his business increased, to one of those high lands in the Royal Exchange, with the faithful and inseparable Nosie, now his foreman and clerk, still his one assistant and attendant, and there he was found close to the open window, in a deadly swoon, one night in the waning summer. They struggled hard and brought him back to consciousness, and got a doctor, but he could only gasp out to Nosie—

"Hold me up, lad, to—see—the—sun—go—down."

They smoothed back the wild and tangled grey hair from the furrowed face, and gently supported him—those reformed thieves, once the terror and pests of Edinburgh—till his eyes became fixed and glazed. But his lips still moved; and Nosie, blinded and choked with tears, whispered, "Hush! he prays!" They listened with bated breath to the faint words; then saw a smile flicker on his grim features as he suddenly murmured, "Kate! my wife!" and then he sank back in their arms and gently passed away.

Nosie wound up the business; paid every one; and then started for his sister's place in Australia; in which colony he

has since become one of the most active of the mounted police.

Blind Martha is still alive, and still clings to Gracie, who is happily married ; and if we were to ask her if she is blind and useless, she would only smile brightly, snatch up one of Gracie's children, cuddle it tight in her bosom, and triumphantly cry to it—" Answer them, dearie ! "



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Tommy's hands fell to his side, and, seeing the blank look of despair on his face, Micky smiled more delightedly than before.

"Yes," he added, pulling forward the curtains from the top of the bedstead, and disclosing a square trap in the ceiling above, "and we've arranged a beautiful bedroom for ye upstairs among the pigeons and bottles. There'll be plenty of drink beside ye, so ye can't complain on that score ; and the pigeons 'ill be lively company, in more ways than one."

Tommy sank faintly into a seat and said nothing. He saw that he was fairly trapped ; that entreaties on his part would only be laughed at ; and that the whole scheme had been carefully concocted and planned by men desperate enough even to stain their hands with murder. The shebeener busied himself in sliding back the concealed trap in the roof—standing on a chair on the bed to reach up to it—and Big Dave grinned in silence, confident that he had conquered every vestige of spirit or resistance lurking in the lad's mind.

"You'll rue it !" Tommy said at last, with wonderful fearlessness looking his father full in the face. "It'll be a bad job for you—p'r'aps the worst you ever tried. Wait till Bob finds me out !"

"Do, and you'll wait awhile," chucklingly returned Dave. "He must be sharper than I take him for if he finds you out up there. The place has been searched before by sharper than he, and the hide wasn't found ; and I don't think the pigeons are likely to betray the secret."

"And how long am I to be kept here ?" Tommy asked, after an awkward pause.

"That depends on your own quickness and skill," said Dave darkly. "How should I know how long you'll take or how clever you are ? You don't get away till I've a good hold on ye, make sure of that—a hold ye won't easily shake off."

"What does that mean ?"

"Go up there, and I'll tell ye," sullenly answered Dave, moving his huge body for the first time, and roughly indicating the trap in the ceiling. "Up wi' ye. It's got to be done ; so no gammon !"

A stool was propped on the chair on the bed by the smiling shebeener, and Tommy got up into the musty loft above—a low, dirty hole between the ceiling and the slates. The place

had only two dim skylights, and one of them had been knocked out to make room for the loopholed front of a pigeon-house, in which some of the birds were now cowering half-asleep. The place was draughty, dark, and intensely cold ; but Dave, taking a lighted candle up from Micky below, looked round with as much satisfaction as if the hole had been a palace, and, pointing to a bundle of straw in a corner, said—

“There’s your bed, and be glad to get it. I’ve put it at the far-end behind the boxes with the drink, so as to be out of the draught, and it’ll have one advantage—ye won’t need to undress to get between the blankets.”

“And why am I to be kept here, imprisoned like a dog or a thief?” simply asked the shivering lad.

“I’ll show ye ;” and Dave put down the candle on one of the trunks to take something carefully from his pockets. “Look !” and to Tommy’s abject surprise he held up a one-pound note of the Bank of Scotland.

Tommy gazed blankly at the note and then at the lowering face and glaring eyes bent down on him. Dave said no more, but allowed the revelation to come to his prisoner in its natural course. Presently he saw Tommy start, and then he had the satisfaction of seeing every drop of blood forsake his face.

“I see ye understand now,” he hoarsely whispered. “Yes, that’s the lay—I want ye to copy the note—engrave one exactly like it. It’ll be a fortune to me and some more who are to help me till it’s ready.”

Tommy shrank back, and cowered, and cowered, till he faintly sank to a seat on the trunk beside the candle, covering his face with his hands.

“That would be forgery !” he faintly gasped ; “banishment, ruin to all concerned. I dare not—shall not do it !”

“I expected you’d say that,” quietly answered Dave. “I guessed that though it was to make a fortune for me, ye’d be too good to put to yer hand. Never mind ! never mind ! it matters nothing what ye say, the thing’s got to be done. Micky, hand up the paper, pen, and ink.”

“What’s the pen and ink for ?” asked Tommy, looking up with a start.

“It’s for you to write to Bob, and the old cove wi’ the grey hair,” said Dave. “Don’t look so joyful ; you’re to write to them, sayin’ ye’re unexpectedly called out of town, but ye’re well and comfortable, and will be back in a day or two. There, now write.”